

**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF FREE PRIMARY
EDUCATION POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI
ON EDUCATION QUALITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: 2010 – 2017**

by

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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI ON EDUCATION QUALITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: 2010 – 2017

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE

27 February 2021

DATE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Brother Dumisani Motsamai for believing in me. I am very grateful for his considerable support throughout my academic journey and for always coming through for me in all my needs.

I'll be forever grateful for my parents Mr and Mrs Motsamai for instilling a sense of discipline in whatever I do. Thank you for setting the best example on how I should conduct myself. A special thank you to my siblings Vusi, Nomonde, Siyabonga and Thabani Motsamai for giving me the reason to advance my career and for their unconditional support when I turn to them for help.

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ABSTRACT

This study offers an analysis of the perspectives and experiences of teachers from the Kingdom of Eswatini (previously known as Swaziland) in relation to the effects of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy on the quality of education in public schools. The Ka-Bhudla Primary School was selected as a case study through purposive sampling because of its location. Qualitative research methods, with a focus on the case study, were employed to obtain the opinions of the school principal and teachers regarding the main research question: 'What effects did the implementation of the FPE policy have on the quality of education?' Semi-structured interviews were held with one school principal and eight primary school teachers. A comprehensive literature review and a document analysis were also undertaken. The findings revealed the emergence of adverse consequences following the implementation of the FPE policy in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The quality of education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School declined drastically as a result of increased learner enrolments and a lack of support from the Eswatini government. Inadequate learning aids, a shortage of school furniture, the absence of infrastructure and a lack of teacher recruitment were also among the reasons cited for the negative consequences of the implementation of the FPE policy. It was concluded that the quality of education can be restored and maintained at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School by successfully addressing the various inadequacies.

KEY CONCEPTS

Education; Free primary education; Learning aids; Public education; Public education policy; Public primary schools; Quality education; Teacher perspectives

TRANSLATION (IsiZulu)

NGAMAFUPHI

Lolu cwaningo lunikeza uhlaziyo lwemiqondo kanye nezinto ezihlangabezane nothisha abavela ezweni laseKingdom of Eswatini (ebikade yaziwa njengeSwaziland) mayelana nemithelela yomgomo Wohlelo Lwemfundo Lwasimahla eMabangeni Aphansi (*Free Primary Education (FPE)*) ngokwezinga lemfundo ezikoleni zombuso.. Isikole iKa-Bhudla Primary School sakhethwa njengesibonelo ngokusebenzisa uhlelo lwesampuli enenhloso *purposive sampling* ngenxa yendawo lapho isikole sitholakala khona.. Indlela yocwaningo (*Qualitative research methods*), eyencike kwizinga lengxoxo egxile kwisibonelo, yasetshenziswa ukuze kutholakale imibono yothishanhloko kanye nothisha besikole mayelana nombuzo obalulekile wocwaningo☺ Ngabe mithelela mini edalwe ukusetshenziswa komgomo weFPE phezu kwezinga lemfundo? '*What effects did the implementation of the FPE policy have on the quality of education?*' Kuye kwabanjwa izinhlobo ezimbaxambili nothishanhloko wesikole kanye nothisha abayisishiyagalombili besikole samabanga aphansi.. Uhlelo lokubuyekizwa kombhalo wobuciko olubanzi (*comprehensive literature review*) luye lwenziwa kanti ukuhlaziywa kombhalo nakho kuye kwenziwa. Ulwazi olutholakele lukhombise ukuqhamuka kwemiphumela engagculisi mayelana nokusetshenziswa komgomo we-FPE kumbuso i-Kingdom of Eswatini. Izinga lemfundo kwisikole iKa-Bhudla Primary School liye lehla kakhulu njengomphumela wenani elikhulayo labafundi ababhalisayo kanye nokusweleka koxhaso oluvela kumbuso waseSwatini. Izinsizakufunda ezinganele, ukwentuleka kwefenisha yesikole, ukusweleka kwengqalasizinda kanye nkosweleka kohlelo lokuheha othisha kube ngezinye zezizathu ezidala ezidalulwe njengemithelela emibi yokusetshenziswa komgomo we-FPE. Kuye kwaphethwa ngokuthi izinga lemfundo lingabuyiswa kabusha futhi ligcinwe likhona esikoleni iKa-Bhudla Primary School ngokuxazulula izingqinamba ezahlukahlukeni ezingagculisi.

AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA

Imfundo; Imfundo Yasimahla Esikoleni Samabanga Aphansi; Izinsizakufunda; Imfundo Yombuso/yomphakathi; Umgomo Wemfundo Yombuso; Izikole zombuso zamabanga aphansi; Imfundo yezinga eliphezulu; Imiqondo yothisha

TRANSLATION (IsiXhosa)

ISISHWANKATHELO

Esi sifundo sihlalutya iimbono namava eetitshala zaseSwatini (ekwakukade kusithiwa kuseSwazini) malunga neziqhamo zomgaqo nkqubo wemfundo yasimahla yamabanga asezantsi, iFree Primary Education (FPE) kwizikolo zikawonkewonke. Kuye kwakhethwa isikolo samabanga asezantsi, iKa-Bhudla saba yisampulu ekhethwe ngenxa yendawo esime kuyo. Kusetyenziswe iindlela zophando ngokuzathuza, kwagxininiswa kwisifundo esingumzekelo kusenzelwa ukufumana izimvo zenqununu nootitshala malunga nombuzo wophando ongundoqo, othi: 'Ube naziphumo zini umgaqo nkqubo iFPE kumgangantho wemfundo?' Kwenziwe udliwano ndlebe olungaqingqwanga ncam nenqununu yesikolo enye nootitshala bamabanga asezantsi abasibhozo. Kubuye kwenziwa uphononongo nohlalutyo olunzulu lwemibhalo emalunga nalo mba. Okufunyanisiweyo kudulise ukuntshula kweziphumo ezingalunganga emva kokusetyenziswa komgaqo nkqubo iFPE eSwatini. Umgangatho wemfundo kwisikolo samabanga asezantsi iKa-Bhudla uhle ngamandla ngenxa yokwanda kwamanani abafundi nokunqongophala kwenkxaso karhulumente waseSwatini. Izixhobo zokufundisa ezinganelanga, ukunqongophala kwefenitshala yesikolo, ukungabikho kwezibonelelo nokungarhwebeshwa kootitshala kubekwe njengezinye izizathu zeziphumo ezibi zeFPE. Kugqitywe kwelokuba umgangatho wemfundo ungabuyiselwa, ugcinwe ngempumelelo kwisikolo samabanga asezantsi iKa-Bhudla xa kunokulungiswa ezi meko ziqhwalelayo.

ISIGAMA ESIPHAMILI

Imfundo; Imfundo esimahla yamabanga asezantsi (eprayimari); Izixhobo zokufundisa; Imfundo kawonkewonke; Umgaqo nkqubo wemfundo kawonkewonke; Izikolo zikawonkewonke zamabanga asezantsi; Imfundo esemgangathweni; Iimbono zootitshala

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM / ABBREVIATION	DESCRIPTION
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ECESWA	Examination Council of Eswatini
EFA	Education for All
FPE	Free Primary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MIITEP	Malawi Integrated In-service Teachers Education Project
SACU	South African Customs Union
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
UPE	Universal Primary education

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of 2005 of Swaziland, as ratified by the Swazi Monarch in February 2006, provides that every child has a right to free education in all public schools, at least up to the end of primary school level (Constitution, 2005: section 29 (6)). Though the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy was implemented a year later than outlined in the Constitution of 2005, the Swaziland Government eventually rolled out FPE in all public schools in 2010. The policy was adopted following a civil litigation initiated by the Swaziland National Ex-Mine Workers Association against the Government. The first beneficiaries of the FPE policy completed their primary education in 2016, graduating to secondary school.

The implementation of FPE in Swaziland (officially renamed as the Kingdom of Eswatini in 2018) was met with excitement and approval by the general public with most applauding the government for adopting what was then referred to as a 'progressive and pro-poor policy'. However, the introduction of this policy was also greeted with challenges at the implementation level. Serious concerns were raised about the government's capacity to sustain such a resource-demanding policy. Dlamini (2017:348) found that the main challenge of this policy was overcrowded classrooms which resulted in a shortages of facilities, infrastructure, equipment and learning materials at schools. Nudelman (2015:13) confirmed that a lack of recruiting teachers deserted education quality in public schools. Therefore, the absence of proper planning, uncertainty, confusion and poor coordination by the government, had a negative effect on the implementation of the FPE policy in the Kingdom of Eswatini (hereafter referred to as Eswatini) (Dlamini 2017:348-350).

An education quality is one that focuses on the whole learner, including the social, emotional, mental, physical and cognitive development of each learner regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status or geographic location. It prepares the learner for life, not just for assessments. A whole learner approach to education is thus promoted through education quality in the FPE teaching and learning context (Slade, 2017).

This research aimed to evaluate the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini, with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. It appears that some of the teachers in Eswatini primary schools were not entirely pleased with the introduction of the FPE policy in the country. From a study in which the attitudes of primary school teachers towards FPE in Eswatini were assessed, Mushoriwa, Mlangeni and Kurebwa (2016:149) found that the majority of the teachers had a negative attitude towards the introduction of FPE in Eswatini. Among other reasons, the animosity was caused by the overcrowding of classrooms, shortage of resources and infrastructure, lowering of educational standards and more workload for teachers. Over and above that, the teachers were incensed by not being consulted prior to the implementation of this policy. Mushoriwa, *et al.* (2016:149) avers that if the teachers' concerns were not addressed, their attitude has a potential of incurring serious psychological effects on both learners and society on the value they attach to the education system.

The study sought to capture the perspectives and experiences of primary school teachers' on the introduction of the FPE policy and its effects on education quality in the country. Based on the research findings and conclusions, recommendations were made on how to restore and maintain education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The benefit of achieving and maintaining education quality is that those learners who get an education have higher incomes, have more opportunities in their lives, and tend to be healthier. Societies benefit as well. Societies with high rates of education completion have lower crime and effective citizen participation in government decisions. A lack of access to education quality is considered the root of poverty (Dlamini 2017:348-351; Slade, 2017).

This introductory chapter commences with the problem statement, the central research question, followed by the secondary questions and the objectives of the research. Following this will be a preliminary literature review and a brief description of the research design and methodology adopted to conduct the research. Descriptions of the ethics clearance processes and possible limitations of the study are included. The structure of the dissertation is also laid out.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Against the above background information, the research problem is that the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini resulted in a decline in education quality due to the high enrolment of learners and a lack of recruiting teachers. The following central research question and secondary questions were asked in an attempt to find solutions to the research problem by focusing on a specific case study, namely the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

1.2.1 Central research question

According to the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, what effects did the implementation of the FPE policy have on education quality?

1.2.2 Secondary questions

The secondary questions that support the main research question are:

- What constitutes education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini?
- What is the most appropriate research design and approach to study the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini?
- What were the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy?
- What effects did the FPE policy have on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
- What are the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on how to maintain education quality?
- How do the first FPE graduates' pass rate compare with previous years' results?

What follows is a brief explanation of the main purpose and objectives of this research. The following section highlights what the research seeks to achieve.

1.3 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The main purpose of this research was to obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The focus was on the changes evident in the teaching and learning environment and the results of the first graduates after the implementation of the FPE policy. The first beneficiaries of the FPE policy graduated in 2016.

The following research objectives were set to achieve the main purpose of the study:

- The **first objective** is to conduct a literature review to determine what constitutes education quality in public primary schools.
- The **second objective** is to determine the most appropriate research design and methodology to study the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini.
- The **third objective** is to critically evaluate the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy.
- The **fourth objective** is to analyse the views of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality.
- The **fifth objective** is to establish how to maintain education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.
- The **sixth objective** is to compare the first FPE graduates' average pass rate with previous years' results.
- The **seventh objective** is to make conclusions and recommendations about the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini.

1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Education is one of the most basic public services and provides the foundation for equity in society. Education quality not only enlightens but also empowers learners to become responsible citizens and enables them to contribute to the maximum extent

possible to the social and economic development of their communities. The notion of education quality is denoted in twofold, which is education and quality. In simple terms this would mean education that is of high standards. However, Fomunyam (2016:46) submits that the concept of education quality can mean different things to different authors. As a consequence, it becomes a hurdle to accommodate the concept in a single definition. Education quality does not end with just instructional or teaching and learning activities, but is also concerned with sufficient school infrastructure, teacher-learner ratios, recruitment of adequately qualified and skills teachers, training and development of teachers, learner engagements, constructive feedback and how learners perform in tests and examinations.

Liwane and Rossouw (2019:3) regard education quality as the teaching and learning process that brings the curriculum to life by allowing critical thinking, freedom of expression and subsequently enhances the quality of the learning outcomes. This definition allows an understanding of education as a complex system within a cultural, economic and political context. This study however largely relied on the assertion by Fouché, Rothmann and Van der Vyver (2017:2) which provides that education quality depends on the well-being, engagement, performance and the retention of teachers. See chapter 5, section 5.3.3 (*Recruiting appropriately qualified and skilled teachers*) for recommendations in this regard.

Education quality provides resources and directs policy to ensure that each learner learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle. Education quality also ensures that each learner learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for the learners and the school staff. During education quality, learners actively engage in learning and is connected to the school and broader community. The learners also have access to personalised learning and feedback and is supported by qualified, caring teachers. Overall, education quality prepares learners for success in further studies and for employment. The learners who received education quality are thus equipped and able to participate in a global environment (Slade, 2017). Hence, the impact of FPE on education quality in Eswatini was measured against these stated conditions.

Employing the appropriate research design and methodology is critical in effectively solving the research problem that the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini

resulted in a decline in education quality due to the high enrolment of learners and a lack of recruiting teachers, as evident in the following section.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In view of the expected increased enrolment of learners accommodated by the FPE policy, there were understandable concerns on the quality of teaching and learning in public schools. History indeed showed that massive learner admissions negatively affected the quality of education in Kenya because of overcrowding and poor class control, inadequate school material such as textbooks and the increased workload of the teachers (Muthaa, 2015:160). An interest of this study was to ascertain from the teachers of public primary schools whether such shortcomings and limitations prevailed in the case of Eswatini. To achieve the purpose outlined for this research, to obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, a qualitative method was employed to get an in-depth understanding of how the Ka-Bhudla Primary School's teachers perceive the effects of FPE on education quality. As such, it was necessary to employ a research design appropriate to conduct the proposed research.

1.5.1 Research design

As already hinted, this research employed qualitative measures on retrieving the perceptions of teachers on the effects of FPE on education quality in Eswatini. Woodwell (2014:58) submits that qualitative research attempts to understand relationships underlying a particular single case or small number of particular events. He added that case studies are the backbone of qualitative research used to inductively understand both what happened and why things happened. According to Saldana and Omasta (2017:4), qualitative analysis is an active process of evaluating someone's thoughts to find patterns in data and be able to interpret any interrelationships. As such, a qualitative research with the focus on a case study was employed in this research in an attempt to adequately answer the research questions. The supportive qualitative technique used in this research, was document analysis. This technique assisted to review the records and registers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School results, which provided answers to the research question: 'How do the first FPE graduates' pass rate compare with previous years' results?'

1.5.2 Research methodology

Rogelberg (2002:174) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. This study was conducted at a primary school found in the Manzini region of Eswatini, namely the Ka-Bhudla Primary School in Eswatini. The school selected is a public school located in a rural area within the central part of Eswatini and forms part of those schools affected by the FPE policy at the beginning of 2010. In this research, the participants were the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School who assisted with their views to achieve the aim of the research. As such, the findings obtained from the data collected at the selected primary school is presumed to be a true representation of the prevailing views of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Permission was sought and obtained from the school principal to conduct online interviews with the teachers of the school.

A detailed literature review was conducted to find answers on the research question: 'What constitutes education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini?'.

1.5.2 Data gathering instruments

The research employed the use of semi-structured interviews focused on the aim of the research. The interview questions provided an opportunity for the participants to explain freely how they feel about a particular issue. For Cishe (2017:77) this method is efficient as the interview questions may be repeated or re-phrased if unclear until saturation is reached. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), saturation may be defined as 'a state beyond the point regarded as necessary or desirable'. This means that the interviews were conducted until all the research questions have been answered sufficiently. Prior to the online interviews, the researcher distributed and read a prepared opening statement that placed the participants in a relaxed and trusting atmosphere before proceeding to the research questions. The answers provided by the participants were interpreted in such a manner that it gave a clear understanding of the teachers' perspectives and experiences on the effects of FPE on the quality of education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

The pass percentages of the first FPE graduates at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School were examined to ascertain whether any change exists in the overall performance of the learners when compared with results of previous years. Permission to the school's

records were obtained on request for analysis. The assumption of the researcher was that the pass percentages would increase to reflect the social uplifting of the learners; despite overcrowding, shortage of school infrastructure and the increased workload of the teachers.

1.6 ETHICS CLEARANCE

The procedure followed in this research was compliant to the research ethics policy and guidelines of the University of South Africa (Unisa). On 8 March 2019, approval for data collection was granted by the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Public Administration and Management, reference number PAM/2019/006. (See Appendix A: *Ethics clearance approval*.) The participants were invited to participate in this study because of their extensive experience in teaching and as implementers of the FPE policy in Eswatini. Participation on this research was anonymous, in that participants were not requested to disclose their identity, which means their identity and privacy were and will be respected. The information that was collected from the participants is treated with strict confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only. No one will be able to connect any participants to the answers and responses they provided.

The participants had the right to withdraw their participation at any given time; hence, participation was regarded as voluntary. The participants did not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise. Hard copies of the survey data are stored in a locked cupboard and the online data is stored on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected. The survey data will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value, which is relatively five years after completing the research project. A copy of the dissertation will be available in the library at the Muckleneuk Ridge Campus of Unisa, Pretoria. A soft copy will be available in the Unisa Institutional Repository: <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/>.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Rogelberg (2002:174-176) explained that the use of case studies in research has its own challenges and limitations. Only a subset of the population is used during data collection, resulting in the limitation not to generalise the findings and

recommendations. The findings of this research is therefore only applicable to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School and cannot be generalised to all public schools in Eswatini.

The objective of the research was to capture the perspectives and experiences of the teachers on the effects of the FPE policy on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Only the school principal and the teachers' input were sought. The possibility exists that the findings of the research are skewed as the teachers have a personal interest in the FPE policy. They are the primary implementers of the policy and might have used this opportunity to present their grievances or rejections of the policy.

1.8 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The dissertation is divided in the following five chapters as outlined in this section:

Chapter 1: General Introduction

This chapter presents a general overview of the study, beginning with the background and the motivation behind it. The purpose and objectives of the study is then listed, which were driven by the research problem and the research questions. The chapter also provides a preliminary literature review along with the adopted research design and methodology. Finally, a brief summary of the ethics clearance processes and possible limitations of this study conclude this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the research by providing information on the relationship between Public Administration and public education policy. This is followed by an address on education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini. A conceptual analysis is then undertaken proceeded by the theoretical foundation underlying the research. The latter discussion involves an overview of FPE policy in Africa and the FPE policy of Eswatini. Chapter 2 concludes with the legislated framework guiding FPE in Eswatini.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology used in this research. It explains the population size, sampling design and the actual sampling size. The framework for data gathering, interview questions as well as the data analyses techniques are discussed in detail in this chapter. The concept of qualitative

soundness and trustworthiness are then defined. The chapter is concluded by an explanation of important ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data as well as the findings based on the responses from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on what they perceive to be the effects of FPE on education quality. The remainder of the chapter then scrutinises the school records on the pass rates before, during and after the implementation FPE in Eswatini.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter that summarises the research conclusions, followed by the recommendations as informed by the data analysis and findings presented in chapter 4.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

As outlined above, this research is concerned with understanding the perspectives and experiences of teachers on the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in Eswatini, specifically at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. This chapter sought to orient the reader to what the study is about, as well as to the steps, processes and methods that were taken in undertaking it. Now that the foundation has been laid, it is fitting to turn to the literature review where theories and concepts take centre stage.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The research problem is that the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini resulted in a decline in education quality due to the high enrolment of learners and a lack of recruiting teachers. A literature review was conducted to find probable solutions to the problem. The available body of knowledge has been explored to eventually establish the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in Eswatini. The chapter begins by establishing the link between public administration and public education policy as a prelude to the clarification of the key concepts used in the research. An in-depth analysis of the theories adopted by the research then follows. Literature on the origin, nature and scope of FPE, as well as experiences of other countries on the implementation of this policy, are also reviewed.

Education quality is also discussed on a broader spectrum. A brief discussion on the history of Eswatini and the legislated framework of the FPE policy in the country conclude the chapter. The literature review will aid the main objective of the research which is to obtain the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini.

2.2 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY

Of great significance at this stage is to establish the link between public administration and public education policy. This will assist in understanding how the crux of the research finds expression in the broader field of public administration. In doing so, the meaning of public administration has to be defined, as well as ventilating the process of policymaking and how it relates to education policy.

Public Administration as a discipline is hardly a century old and has passed through several phases of development. The discipline originated in the United States and according to Woodrow Wilson's article entitled *The Study of Administration* (Thornhill, Van Dijk & Isioma 2014:6), its importance was to make a distinction between politics and administration. For him, politics had to do with policies or expressions of a State's will, while administration has to do with the execution of these policies. In this regard,

it is important to note that Public Administration operates within the political environment with its activities and programmes carried out by the government. Unlike private administration which gets evaluated on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, public administration's ultimate test is the efficient delivery of services to the people and the citizens' satisfaction. What this means is that government programmes are not for profit, they are largely non-profit activities, their services border around service functions, promotional, development and regulatory tasks (Mathebula, 2019:344-345).

Thornhill and Van Dijk (2010:102) suggest that Public Administration should be viewed as an applied science which relates to the practical situations within which public administration is practiced. Administration does not take place in a vacuum; its aim is the effective and efficient realisation of goals within the borders of a specific country. These goals are what have been alluded to by Mathebula (2019:345) as delivering services and products to the people by the government authorities. Thornhill and Van Dijk (2010:101) introduce another aspect of public administration: they noted that the discipline relates to the activities and processes which deal with the formulation and implementation of public policies at all spheres of government. This view implies public administration does not only determine the execution of activities but also describes how an activity should be implemented.

Public education policy is but one of many decisions that are initiated by the executive branch of government aimed at developing its people. All over the world, national governments are considering educational problems in ground-breaking ways. These terms differ somewhat from country to country. Du Plessis (2020:3) states that public education policies have been developed to increase the fraction of children who attend school and to improve the quality education offered. To understand the decision-making process concerning public education, it is necessary to appreciate that public schools are in a way a monopoly. In the business sense, this term means an exclusive ownership through legal privilege, command of supply or concerted action. Most countries, including Eswatini, have an absolute or monopolistic control over the service of education. The Ministry of Education of Eswatini determines all the policies relating to education in the country. This means that a decision taken by the Ministry will apply uniformly to all public schools in the country (Hoffmann & Marcus 2011:104).

Hoffman and Marcus (2011:105-110) note that although private schools are run by individuals or secluded groups, they do offer competition to public schools. Private schools are technically independent, though some administrative rules and regulations are determined by government. The number of learners who attend private schools is proportionally smaller than the number that public schools absorb. The character of public schools is that they are largely dependent on direct and indirect financial aid from the government. The involvement of government in public schools goes as far as formulating policies and regulations that govern their operations. Public education is regarded as a public service which the government has a responsibility to ensure its optimal deliverance to the satisfaction of its people. With regard to this research, the FPE policy is but one public education policy which has been adopted by the Eswatini government as a service to its people. It spells out a decision taken by the country to do away with tuition fees for all primary school children attending a public school in the country. This point then gravitates to the definition of public administration which mention that the discipline is concerned with the formulation and implementation of public policies. But, how does the process of public policy-making unfold within the public administration context?

Public policy making, as articulated by Anderson (2015:85-89), can be generally summarised in four stages and these are: policy formulation, policy adoption, policy budgeting and policy implementation. In brief, policy formulation is the identification of a problem and the crafting of alternatives or options for dealing with a particular problem. The legislature would be the primary focus of this exercise. Whereas policy adoption involves actions by some official person or body to adopt, modify or reject preferred policy alternatives. Normally this stage will go through a process of voting to determine an outcome. Once a policy is adopted it then passes through what is known as policy budgeting. This is a process whereby the executive presents to the legislature allocated funds for the successful implementation of a policy. However, behind the scenes budgeting is a multifaceted process involving many actors at different spheres of government. If the budget is adopted, a policy would then move to the implementation stage. According to Anderson (2015:90), policy implementation is the carrying out or execution of a program that has been adopted by the legislature. This stage would encompass whatever needs to be done to carry a law into effect, so to apply it to the target population. Trusting that it now becomes clear that the

development of the FPE policy would have passed through these stages of policy making all the way to its implementation. Refer to below section 2.3.5 (*Public policy*) for further information about public policy.

2.2.1 Quality education in public primary schools

Literature is filled with varying definitions of quality. The Oxford English Dictionary (2020) defines quality as a standard of something measured against other things of similar kind. In addition Budiharso and Tarman (2020:101) defines quality as a product or a service that is free of any deficiencies. These scholars believe that a product of quality should be fit for the intended usage and exceed the customers' expectation. The concept of quality is summarised by Akareem and Hossain (2016:53-55) as fitness for purpose. They explained that quality in primary education speaks to what is taught, how it is taught, to which learners and in what setting. The observation is that there are indicators visible when the quality of education improves or declines. To this extent, quality education should thus be fit for purpose in terms of the curriculum, teaching plans, education level of the teachers, the learners' skills, attitudes and knowledge, as well as the school infrastructure and supporting material.

A working paper published by UNICEF titled 'Defining Quality Education" (2000:4), offers a broad and comprehensive perspective on what constitutes quality education, and these include.

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn and supported in learning by their families and communities.
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities.
- Content that is reflected in curricula relevant for the acquisition of basic skills; especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, skills for life and basic knowledge of health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace.
- Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-mannered classrooms.
- Valid and reliable assessments that facilitate learning and reduce disparities.

- Outcomes that encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Saxena, Saxena and Gihar (2009:215-220) bring on board another interesting revelation to the debate of quality education. They contend that the quality of education depends largely on the quality of and performance of the teachers. Their argument is that the tasks of teachers are demanding, challenging and complex in that they are not only expected to fulfil their teaching commitments but also inculcate values among learners. Through their interaction with learners, teachers engage in activities to ensure that the learners are able to apply their learning's in real life. Therefore, unless school's recruit quality teachers, they cannot expect quality education.

Education is thus a complex system within a cultural, economic and political context. As hinted above in Chapter 1, section 1.4.2 (*Quality education*) This study relied on the assertion by Fouché, Rothmann and Van der Vyver (2017:2), that quality education entails the well-being, engagement, performance and the retention of teachers. In this study, the focus is on the teachers' perspectives on the effects of free primary education policy.

What then constitutes quality education in Eswatini? According to Zwane and Malale (2018:4), teachers play an essential role in quality education and thus the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Osakwe (2016:176) asserts that quality is based on how efficient the teachers are, and how adequate the instructional materials and facilities needed for teaching and learning, are. This statement retaliates to the submission of Saxena, *et al.* (2009:215) which suggests that quality education is dependent upon the quality of teachers.

Van der Merwe (2011:774) states another important factor on the question of what may constitute quality education in Eswatini. The author suggests that school effectiveness may also be an element of quality education. This would be translated to classroom successes, which is mainly defined by quality feedback to individual learners. Even though academic outcomes may be largely influenced by the learners' social background and own abilities, for Van der Merwe (2011:775-177) the school environment in which the common characterises of effective schooling prevail, remain

the most conducive to any possible learner success. Moreover, Osakwe (2016:177) tends to point to the fact that the concept of quality education is diversified: it encompasses how learning is managed and organised, the content of learning and the level of achievement in terms of outcomes and what goes on in the learning environment.

So far, the strongest arguments that have come forth in this section include the following:

- The realisation that the quality of teachers plays a meaningful role in the administration of quality education to learners. This quality is determined by the qualifications possessed, experience as well as the commitment which drive the teachers to ensure good results.
- Lack of learning enablers has a negative effect on quality education in public schools. Learning enablers consist of all instructional materials and the tools needed for teaching and effective learning.
- The outcome and the level of achievement on the part of the learners is part of quality education. However, the argument here is that good results should not be the only indicator of effective learning.
- The environment within which the learning process is administered was apparent in the literature reviewed. Effective schooling cannot be separated from a conducive environment. It is thus imperative to consider the wider learning environment and the school infrastructure that would be appropriate for effective learning.

The above points shed light on what constitutes education quality in public primary schools, and enabled an empirical investigation into the changes in the teaching and learning environment following the implementation of the FPE policy in the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The pass rate of the first FPE graduates were also compared with previous years' results to establish the effects of the FPE policy.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The research uses the following concepts and phrases which are related and relevant to the scope of the study. Definitions of education, public education policy and free primary education are provided after which other key concepts are defined.

2.3.1 Education

Education is one of the major public services, along with health care and law and order. Education can loosely be defined as the facilitation of learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values beliefs and habits. According to Waks (2014:12), education may be defined as a process of nourishing and rearing, and also the systematic instruction, schooling and training of young people. It is an exercise by which culture transmits itself across generations. This definition insists that the education process must be deliberate, systematic and sustainable.

In public administration and in the subject of Public Administration, it is useful to understand the difference between formal and non-formal education, and therefore the difference between institutions for formal education and other institutions. We can define formal education as purposeful teaching and learning offered by and facilitated within an institution whose main business (objective or line function) is education. Such an institution has been established to solely provide education. Non-formal education, however, is purposeful teaching and learning within an institution whose main business (objective or line function) is not necessarily education (Tolofari, 2005).

Very few institutions do not offer teaching and the opportunity to learn. An organisation that does not train its personnel can hardly expect to do well. However, from the perspective of macro management of government functions, it does not seem wise to include all teaching and learning under the policy umbrella of education because this can easily lead to overregulation.

2.3.2 Public education policy

Education policy can be formally understood as the actions taken by governments in relation with educational practices, and how governments address the production and delivery of education in a given system (Tolofari, 2005; Waks, 2014:12).

All cultures provide formal and non-formal education to their children. This has been the case for through all ages. Children were taken aside for instruction in religious, moral and practical issues. However, mass education provided by the government in a regulated system of national education in schools as secular institutions, is a recent phenomenon – roughly speaking, about a century old. Previously, the schooling of children was regarded as a responsibility of their parents and religious institutions. Since the government has taken this responsibility upon itself, the education budget has grown world-wide to the largest item of government expenditure next to defence. This has crucial implications for the way in which states and governments manage its educational systems. The 20th century has indeed seen a revolution in education. Nolte (2004:122) summarises the main trends in education in the 20th century as follows:

- High increases in the number of learners.
- Funding for education seems to be stretched to the limit.
- The massification of higher education by adapting education to the needs of the mass and the average student at the bachelor degree level.
- Increasing attention to technical and technological training because of new knowledge about the economic results of education.
- The need for life-long learning as the foundation of operational excellence, continuous improvement and innovation.
- The need for equity in education provision that requires putting systems in place to ensure that every child has an equal chance for success.

As our economies and societies have evolved from industrial to becoming knowledge based, education has become crucial for individual and social progress. Education systems are now more than ever required to provide high-quality education and competencies, in addition to new demands for well-being and values, to enable young generations to design and contribute to our fast-paced, global economy. But education policies may not reach the classroom, failing to achieve their intended outcomes, because of weak implementation processes. Most educational policies are not implemented because they are vaguely stated and the financing implications are not

always practicable. Another reason for failure is that the content of a policy is based on an empirically unsustained theoretical relationship between instruments and outcomes. Other common challenges associated with the implementation of public education policy include a lack of funding vast education systems, poor administration of education systems and policies, as well irrelevant curricula. The allocation of learners to wrong levels and classes and the inappropriate use of teaching and learning technology also pose challenges. A shortage of opportunities and institutions for life-long learning also seems to be challenging.

Four dimensions are crucial to take into account when approaching education policy implementation (Viennet & Pont, 2017):

- The policy design: the way a policy is debated and framed, the logic it suggests between the policy problem and the solution it offers and the feasibility of the latter determine to a great extent whether a policy is ready for implementation.
- The stakeholders and their engagement: education policies are implemented by individuals and organisations, making them central to the implementation process both because of their own characteristics and thanks to their interactions with other role-players.
- The institutional, policy and societal context: the institutional setting comprises the formal and informal social constraints that regulate the implementation process in a given education system. The other policies in place in education and other sectors also need to be taken into account because they may facilitate or hinder the implementation process.
- The implementation strategy: the implementation strategy refers to the operational plan that guides the process to make the policy happen in effect.

With regard to this research and the case under study, the Swaziland Constitution of 2005 guarantees the right of all Swazis to basic education. Compulsory education is viewed as a cornerstone of Eswatini and aims to provide all citizens with equal opportunities in their adult life. The public education policy of Eswatini is set at providing quality, relevant and affordable education and training opportunities for the general public in order to develop all aspects of their lives for self-reliance, social and

economic development. The vision of public education policy in Eswatini is the attainment of quality education for all the learners of public and private schools irrespective of their socio-economic background to enhance their productive capacity; thus potentially improving the quality of their lives (Zwane & Malale, 2018:9).

2.3.3 Free primary education

Free primary education is the non-requirement of tuition fees for one to enrol at a school. The general aim of a free primary education programme is to provide more school and education opportunities, especially for the poor communities, as the payment of school fees tend to prevent a large proportion of children from attending school (Sifuna, 2004:6).

Free education in the Swazi context means that every Swazi child at primary level at a public school does not need to pay anything towards tuition fees for that education. Sections 6 and 29 of the Constitution of 2005 stipulate as follows:

Every Swazi child shall within three years of the commencement of this Constitution have the right to free education in public schools at least up to the end of primary school, beginning with the first Grade.

This clause was based on the Dakar Education for All (EFA) Framework, which was adopted by United Nations (UN) member states in 2000. It can be found in the section on the rights of the child (UNESCO, 2000).

2.3.4 Quality education

Quality can be defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind or the degree of excellence. From an educational angle, Akareem and Hossain (2016:53) provides that quality in primary education is an expression to what is taught, how it is taught, to which children and in what setting. Quality education requires putting systems in place to ensure that every child has an equal chance for success. That requires understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual learners and students or by populations of students, and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers.

Saxena, *et al.* (2009:182) submit that quality education must results in development to the physical, intellectual, moral and social fields. They contend that quality

education should allow the child to develop skills in selected fields, develop self-confidence through knowledge and develop qualities of character and leadership. As hinted above in section 2.2.1 (*Quality education in public primary schools*), the indicators for the quality of education include the performance and retention of teachers at a school.

2.3.5 Public policy

Public policy is generally defined as a relatively stable purposive course of action or inaction followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. For the purpose of this research, public policy refers to a statement of intent by a government or deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve national outcomes (Anderson, 2015:2). The process of policy making does not happen overnight, there are phases and stages that must be followed before a policy can come into being. The first stage is known as problem identification and planning. This is where a condition or situation that produces needs or dissatisfaction among people and for which a relief or redress by government action is sought, is identified. The importance of this stage is to ensure that only public problems find expression in the agenda setting instead of private problems (Anderson, 2015:81).

The second stage of the policy process is agenda setting. Important to note is that of the thousands of demands made upon government, only a fraction will receive serious consideration by policy makers. Rushefsky (2002:8) says this stage consists of those items which has been placed on the table that policy makers are discussing and seriously considering. For Anderson (2015:85), each problem must compete for official attention because legislatures and executive have limited time and resources.

Once the government has started to seriously consider an issue, the next step is to develop a plan to correct the problem. The phase is known as policy formulation. This phase involves the development of policy alternatives for dealing with problems on the public agenda. Dye (2016:40) raises important points to consider concerning the environment where this process takes place. He explains that policy formulation occurs in government bureaucracies, legislative rooms, portfolio committees and other meetings of special commissions.

To then achieve policy goals, programs require funding. This would be done through budgeting and identification of beneficiaries. Rushefsky (2002:19-20) notes that budgeting is an important function in the executive branch of government as it provides an opportunity to assert priorities. Within the budget some issues will receive greater portions compared to others while some programs will suffer decreases. Interest groups have played a major role in lobbying for an increase in the budget allocated for public education.

Policy implementation according to Dlamini (2017:31) can be referred to as what happens after a bill becomes law. Implementation consists of whatever is being done to carry a law into effect, to apply it to the target population and to achieve its goals. These activities may include the creation of new organisations, departments, agencies and the assignment of new responsibilities to existing organisations. All these activities involve decisions by government officials that determine policy. Public policies are thus conceived as the main outputs of political systems.

After a program has been implemented, judgements are made about how well a program has served its purpose. This phase of policy is known as policy evaluation. This view is articulated by Dye (2016:54) who clarifies that policy evaluation seeks to learn whether or not policies are achieving their specified goals, at what cost and with what intended and unintended effects. The approach of this study is linked to this phase as its purpose is that of understanding teachers' perspective on the effects of the FPE policy on the education quality in Eswatini.

Policy evaluation concludes the public policy circle. Rushefsky (2002:25-27) explains that a possible course of action after evaluation could be some modification on the policy, and this calls for returning to earlier stages of the policy process. Another outcome may be the total termination of a policy. Although unlikely, possible reasons might be financial constraints on the part of government or the completion of specialised projects.

The phases of the policy making process are summarised and illustrated below.

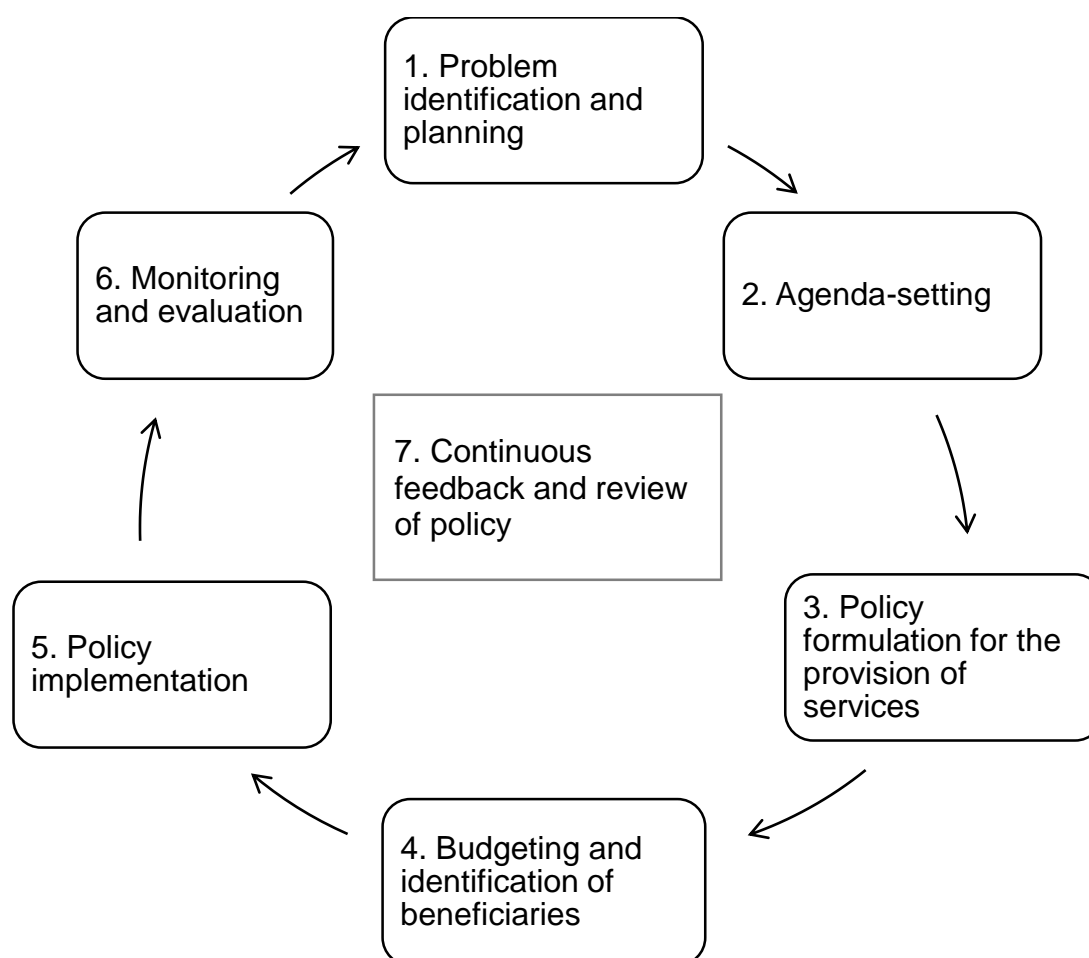


Figure 1: Phases of the policy making process

Source: Author's interpretation

2.3.6 Public primary school

A public primary school is a school that is administered or maintained at public expense for the education of children of a community or district. Public schools generally constitute in part, a system of free public education that includes primary and secondary education (Smith, 2018:56).

According to Mothata (2000:133), a public school needs to have the following features:

- Every public school represents a partnership between the government and the local community.

- Public schools are financed entirely or to a great extent by public resources. In the case of Eswatini, public schools are funded from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Training.
- The policy regarding admission requirements to public schools is laid down by the government bodies.
- The mission, policy and character or ethos of every public school is determined within the national education framework.

2.3.7 Graduate versus learner

A graduate is someone who has completed a qualification, such as obtaining a bachelor's degree from any institution of higher learning, whereas a learner is any person ranging from childhood development to the adult phases. A learner is involved in any kind of formal or non-formal education and training activity. In this study, the concept of 'learner' refers to a person studying at a public school and replaces the concepts of 'pupil' and 'student' (Mothata, 2000:94).

2.3.8 Learning process

Learning may be considered, in its broadest sense, as a process of adaption. Through the process of learning, one acquires new ways of behaving or performing in order to make better judgement to demands of life. The process of learning occurs when learners draw information, ideas and wisdom from their teachers and use learning resources effectively. In this study, the focus is on the teachers' perspectives on the effects of free primary education policy on the learning processes at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School (Mothata, 2000:14; Smith, 2020).

2.3.9 Perspective

A perspective is a particular way of thinking about something normally influenced by certain beliefs and experiences. According to Mcleod (2013), a perspective is similar to an approach, in that it involves certain assumptions or beliefs about human behaviour, the way they function and their responses to different environmental factors. For this research, a perspective means a particular attitude towards something

or a point of view, particularly the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE on quality education in public schools.

2.3.10 Effect

The concept of 'effect' may be defined as a change which is a result or consequence of an action. This definition resonates with what Chandler and Munday (2011:118) submit that an effect is what predominately follows an event or a combination of events. It is a result of an outcome or consequence of a phenomenon. In this study, it therefore refers to what transpired to quality education following the implementation of the FPE policy.

2.3.11 Basic human rights

According to Section 14(1) of the Constitution of Swaziland of 2005, basic human rights are the fundamental and inalienable rights of all people. In essence, basic human rights are egalitarian. Human rights are universal and are an international legal framework. Basic human rights include the right to freedom, irrespective of race, colour, religion, language, or political, national or social origin. The Universal declaration of Human Rights as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217A (111) of 10 December 1948, states that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind (United Nations, 1948). No distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of a country or territory to which a person belongs – whether it be independent, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty (Amien & Farlam, 1998:14).

2.4 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

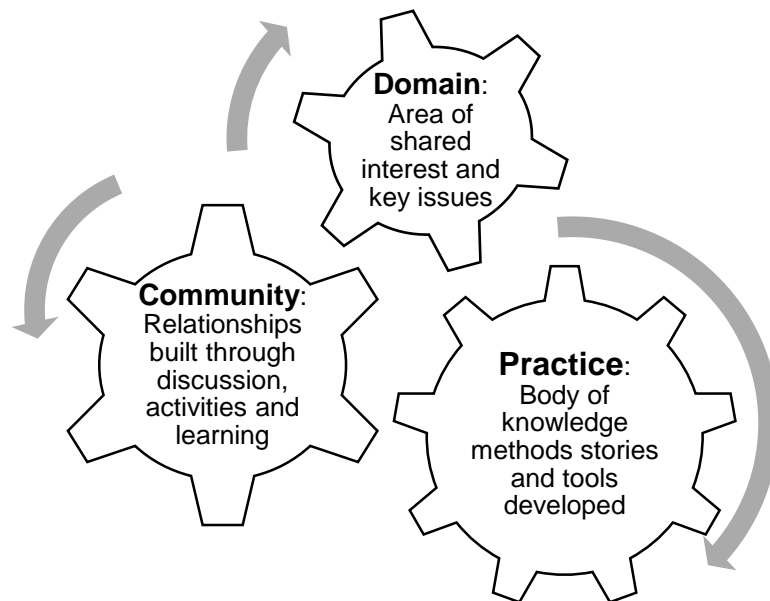
The theoretical framework that underpins this study focuses on the link between public administration and education. Free primary education is driven by theoretical frameworks such as the community of practice theory, the integrated systems theory, change management theory and stakeholder theory. Furthermore, there are a number of stakeholders that have an interest in the delivery of quality education including the community and government. Teachers as one of the major stakeholders in education need to be brought on board on any change to be affected on the public education system.

2.4.1 Community of practice theory

A community of practice is a persistent, sustained social network of individuals who share and develop an overlapping knowledge base, set of beliefs, values, history and experience focussed on a common practice or natural enterprise (Grant, 2005:81). According to Wenger (1998), the process of learning begins with the 'legitimate peripheral participation' of newcomers at the periphery of a community. Participation in a community of practice is a process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. A community of practice thus refers to a group of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise with similar task responsibilities that solve authentic problems and promote interdisciplinary knowledge and practice across different groups. Based on the meaning of community of practice, the community of practice theory refers to a group of people who share a common passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact along regularly.

Teachers, in the public-school context, are a critical element of successful teaching and learning. They participate in teacher communities, sharing practices and constructing identities. Teachers, as classroom-based educators, also belong to a multiple teachers' professional communities, teachers unions and various social groups that influence their thinking and shape their perspectives (Grant, 2005:81). Among the teachers teaching at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, some commute from urban areas as they happened to find themselves at this rural located public school because of employment needs, whereas some belong to the local community and probably have children attending as learners in the same school. The group of teachers from the urban areas can be conceived as an informal community of practice where these teachers participate in shared practices, lift clubs and obviously the urban way of doing things. Similarly, the local based teachers as a community of practice might employ different tools of analysis to their urban counterparts about the implementation of free primary education in Eswatini (Grant, 2005:82-87).

The functioning of the community of practice theory is illustrated below.



Source: Author's interpretation

2.4.2 Integrated systems theory

Public policy may be viewed as a political system's attempt to respond to demands arising from the people it serves. The political system as analysed in Anderson (2015:14) comprise of those identifiable and interlinked institutions and activities in society that is responsible to make authoritative decisions which are binding on society. A system is a collection or set of things that are related in such a way that the collection behaves in a characteristic way. The elements of the collection can be seen as working together towards a goal. From a systems perspective a public institution may be viewed as a system consisting of inputs (resources), processes (management) outputs (services or products), feedback and the environment. According Van der Waldt (2016:68), the basis for the systems theory is that any entity may be seen as a system when the way in which it responds to the mandate which it was established for is being studied.

Cloete and Wissink (2007:132) attest that the integrated systems theory focuses on the response by the political system on the demands and needs of a community of practice, interests' groups and society. Inputs from the external environment such as the needs and problems of society serve as the basis for action in this theory. The

integrated systems theory is well placed to define and interpret the effects of FPE on education quality in Eswatini. Dlamini (2017:102) submits that a school as a unit or sub-section of a Department of Education is directly or indirectly part of a country's system. This would also apply to the environment at which the FPE policy exists. Cloete and Wissink (2007:132) note that, the environment which may be political, economic and social in nature influences organisations.

Anderson (2015:51) points to the importance of recognising the fact that education is a system, a collection of processes. As a process, education is seen as a transformation of inputs, for example students and information, into outputs (citizens and workers) through the application of teachers' skills and other factors. The integrated systems theory is applied in this research for the researcher to better analyse the relationship between the school, the learning process and the environment under which the FPE policy was implemented. Hence, a primary-education system is in fact a collection of education institutions (including universities) that can be viewed as collectively achieving the goal of providing educated learners for the country and increasing our knowledge capacity. The inputs into the system are the learners and resources while the outputs is an increase in knowledge. The operations within the systems are typically, teaching, learning and research.

The integrated systems theory is illustrated below.

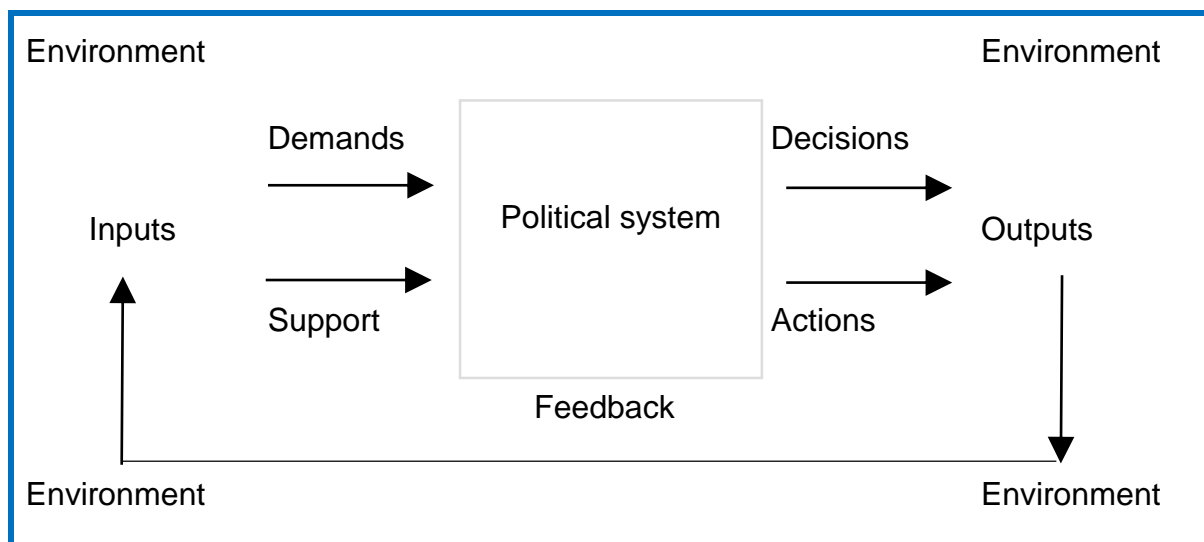


Figure 2: Integrated systems theory

Source: Adapted from Anderson (2015)

2.4.3 Theory of change management

The theory of change management has to do with all the approaches which have been developed to support, prepare and help teams, individuals and organisations in making organisational change. Mabunda (2016:54) states that change management assists organisations identify any existing elements within organisations resistant to change and further develop strategies to overcome barriers and resistance to change.

Mabunda (2016:56-57) points to five basic components of change management which should precede any change. These components are:

- defining a set of goals;
- establishing what will not be changed;
- getting employees into the process;
- creating a plan for change; and
- communicating with employees.

The implementation of the FPE policy of Eswatini meant that all public primary schools within the country will experience some level of change in the manner in which they are run. As alluded in previous sections this change comes in the drastic increased enrolments of learners in schools and the need for new infrastructure to mitigate the influx. Playgrounds, libraries and well-ventilated classrooms to learn in are non-negotiable requirements for quality education. According to the change management theory, teachers and school administrators need to be brought on board before the implementation of the FPE policy so to prepare them on the changes expected upon implementation of the policy.

An illustration of the change management theory follows below.

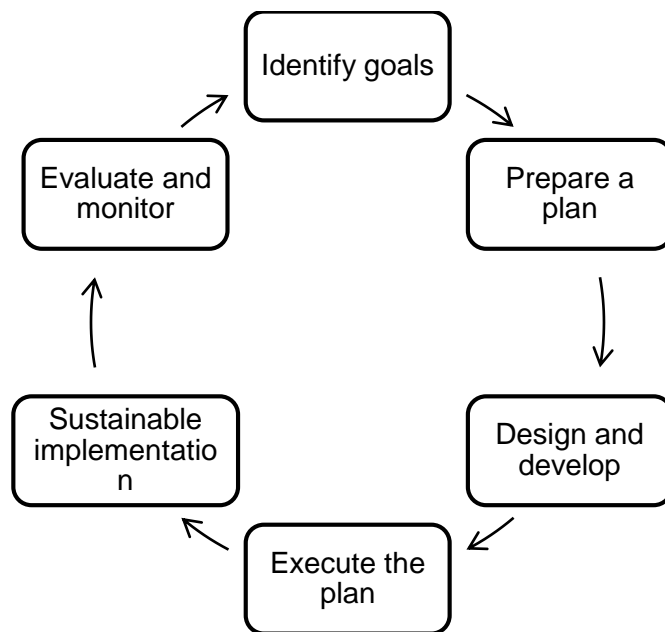


Figure 3: Change management theory

Source: Adapted from Mabunda (2016)

2.4.4 Stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory is a theory of organisational management and business ethics that was developed by several scholars primarily to understand and address challenges relating to the morals and values in managing an organisation. The stakeholder theory seeks to define the specific stakeholders of an organisation and then examines the conditions under which managers treat these parties as stakeholders. Parmar (2010:405) define a stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the achievements of organisation's objectives. This definition refers to those groups who are vital for the survival and success of the organisation. Meaning that without their support and existence an organisation may not perform to its full potential.

In fields such as law and public administration and management, the stakeholder theory succeeded by suggesting that stakeholders' needs should be put at the beginning of any action. One of the greatest contributors to the stakeholder theory, Parmar (2010:405), suggests that organisations stand a better chance to effectively deal with their problems if all stakeholders work as a unit for the achievement of the

organisational objectives. From a stakeholder perspective, public organisations can be understood as a set of relationships among groups that have a stake in the activities that make up the organisation.

The interconnected relationship that forms the education system of a country depends on the concerted effort from different stakeholders for the successful achievement of educational goals. Van der Merwe (2011:775) states that education is not only the responsibility of parents but involves the participation of various stakeholders who have an interest in the learner development for social and economic mobility. Stakeholders in public education in most cases would refer to anyone who has invested in the welfare and success of a school and its learners, including teachers, learners, community members and government (Van der Merwe, 2011:776). Therefore according to this theory, any policy shift which concerns education in Eswatini needs the participation of all the internal and external stakeholders to ensure full support and successful implementation of that policy.

An example of the internal and external stakeholders of a typical public school in Eswatini is illustrated below.

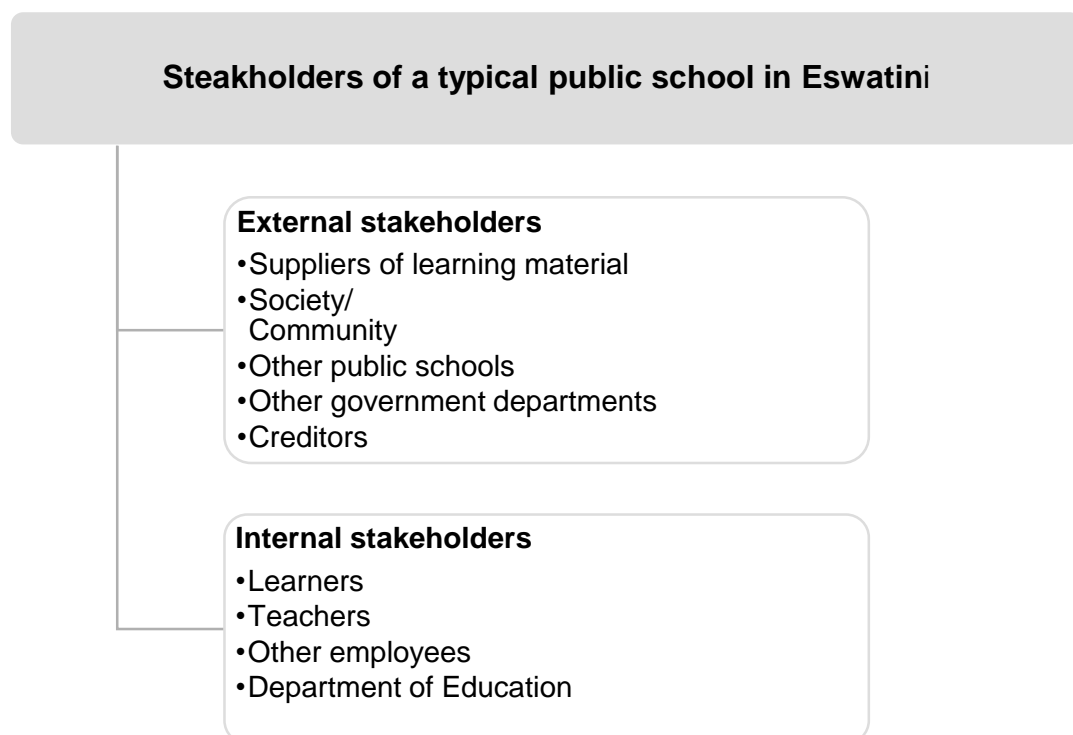


Figure 4: Stakeholder theory

Source: Author's interpretation

In essence, there is no single theory that would be adequate in understanding the effects of FPE policy on education quality in Eswatini public schools. However, from the theories that have been discussed above, the integrated systems theory is considered as the most applicable to this study. This is so because the development of the FPE policy seems to have been conceived in the same manner coined by Anderson (2015:6), as mentioned above in section 2.2 (*Public administration and public education policy*). The process of policy making commences in the environment from interest groups that place pressure on government to adopt certain policy positions. This speaks to what the Eswatini National Ex-miners Association proposed to the government of Eswatini, forcing it to comply with the provision of the Constitution of Eswatini of 2005 on implementing free primary education in public schools in the country. The following section comprises an overview of free primary education policy in Africa.

2.5 OVERVIEW OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY IN AFRICA

A brief overview of the status of free primary education in Malawi, Kenya and Uganda are provided to pave the way towards understanding Eswatini's FPE policy. The focus on these countries is due to the fact that they were among the first countries to adopt the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy as enshrined in the 1948 United Nations Humans Rights declaration. This declaration affirmed education as a basic human right and further provided that it should be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages (United Nations, 2015:54). The experience of these countries with the FPE policy will assist in contextualising what is currently happening in Eswatini with regards to this policy.

The past two decades have seen many countries in the Sub-Saharan region embracing free education and presenting it as a policy, beginning with Malawi in 1994 (Riddel, 2003:2). Free primary education was announced in Malawi in June 1994 following the newly elected government brought into power through the first multi-party election since independence. According to Abuya, *et al.* (2015:8), the first year of FPE saw learner enrolment increased by 50% from 1.9m in 1993/4 to about 3.2m in 1994/5. He suggests that such rapid increase in enrolment challenged what was already a weak system with insufficient teachers and lack of infrastructure.

To address the shortfall on teachers, Malawi introduced what was referred to as Malawi Integrated In-Service Teacher Education Project (MIITEP), designed to produce a large number of teachers at a low cost in a much shorter period than the normal full-time teacher training programme. Free Primary Education is noted as one of those demanding policies to the fiscal of any country. According to Abuya, *et al.* (2015:8), the impact which the FPE policy had on the fiscal of Malawi can be evidenced on the decision by the Malawi government to double expenditure on education between 1990 and 1997. The budget allocation in Malawi rose from 11% to 24% during this period with a large proportion going to the recruitment of teachers. Mukeredzi (2009:48-52) also laments these adverse consequences that FPE had on the economies of developing countries.

Free primary education was first introduced in Kenya in the late 1970s. However, the programme was later abolished in 1988 under the Structural Adjustment Programme to ease the financial burden on the public education system. This meant parents had to contribute more towards the education of their children through a cost-sharing programme. These changes came with dire consequences as Kenya experienced low enrolment, primary school dropouts, grade repetition as well as poor transition from primary to secondary school. To reverse these poor trends in educational achievement, the government initiated an all free primary education programme in January 2003 (Cockburn & Mariara, 2010:126).

In Kenya, Muthaa (2015:160) found that massive learner admissions affected the quality of education offered because of overcrowding and poor class control, inadequate school material such as textbooks and increased workload for the teachers. Tooley, Dixon and Stanfield (2008:462) revealed the responses from the parents of those children who attended government schools offering FPE in Kenya. They claimed that following the implementation of the FPE policy, teachers had become lazy because no one checked on them. Regrettably, it seemed that the only way to get a child to perform well was if a parent engaged the services of a private tutor.

Fortunately, Abuya, *et al.* (2015:8) submits that a different situation exists in Uganda, who is widely reported to be a referral case study for the successful implementation of FPE. Uganda's FPE policy was an outcome of the educational review commission

convened in July 1987 to evaluate the then existing system and recommend measure for improvement. Part of the focus of the commission was to explore options to increase access, improve quality and enhance equity at all levels of education in Uganda (Kyohairwe, 2016:27). FPE policy was officially introduced in 1997 with the objectives to establish, provide and maintain quality education as the basis for making basic education accessible to the learner and relevant to his/her needs, making education equitable and eliminating disparities and inequalities. To date in 2020, FPE in Uganda has dramatically increased primary school enrolment and minimised gender inequalities in access to education.

Abuya, *et al.* (2015:8) observed that following the introduction of FPE in Uganda, the government increased the budget on education and a host of external agencies contributed to ensure quality education was achieved and with that, Uganda was not subjected to most of the challenges faced by other Sub-Saharan countries when implementing FPE.

From the literature overview of the FPE policy in Africa, it can be inferred that a great deal of groundwork needs to be performed before a policy of this magnitude can be implemented. This is because almost all the countries under focus experienced an ‘access shock’ which resulted in classrooms that were overcrowded, shortages of teachers and a lack of teaching and learning materials like textbooks. For any country which desires to implement a policy of this nature, it would be ideal to learn from the experiences of some of these case studies in order to be adequately prepared for potential consequences.

The following section presents a brief introduction on the history of the Kingdom of Eswatini and how the political landscape paved the way towards free primary education. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the key legal frameworks that embodies the free primary education policy of Eswatini.

2.6 FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY OF ESWATINI

This section briefly introduces the political history of Eswatini, the nature and character of the country and its relevance to public policy making.

2.6.1 History of Eswatini: Paving the way toward free primary education

Mzizi (2004:99) states that the Kingdom of Eswatini remains alone as a single-party monarchy in the continent of Africa. The current system of rule of the country has combined the traditional and Western style of governance. Gumedze (2005:268) posits that parliament, judiciary and other organs of state which form the modern day democratic institutions exist parallel to what is referred to as 'Swazi Law and Custom' which remains unwritten and dictates that the King rules the country in council. It is through this same structure that the monarchy used to abrogate the 1968 Constitution which permitted the participation of political parties and assert all powers to the King as a traditional as well as the political leader of Eswatini.

According to Mzizi (2004:99-102), between 1973 and 1978, the King recreated himself as an absolute monarch and governed the country with a council of ministers which, through the Legislative order of April 1973, had no say on any legal Bill except to draft it and present to the King to rectify as Kings-Order-in-Council. What this means is that the 1973 events enabled the King to transform himself from a Constitutional Monarch with executive powers to an Absolute Executive Monarch with unlimited powers. The April 1973 decree birthed a wave of dissenting voices within the country from civic organisations and political parties advocating for democratic reforms and the re-adoption of the multi-party system of governance. In the preceding years, the monarch found itself faced with a permanent opposition from the old and emerging pro-democracy formations which applied pressure to the status quo to democratise.

The development of the Eswatini Constitution of 2005 came about as a result of the mounting pressure upon the monarch to reform. Although the adoption of the Constitution was not the ultimate victory for the pro-democracy formations, it became a landmark achievement to some burning demands that were raised against the monarch which included the recognition of the Bill of rights and the rectification of the 1948 United Nations declaration on Universal Primary Education (Dlamini, 2013:5).

The question of whether Eswatini's financial position was stable enough to sustain some of the concessions made, is answered in the following paragraphs.

Simelane (2014:249250) wrote that Eswatini is one of the African countries that are experiencing some fiscal challenges, In 2010, around the same time when the FPE

policy was introduced, Eswatini was confronted with serious fiscal difficulties largely due to fiscal indiscipline. The situation became worse in 2011 as the country's economy was on the brink of collapse. This was also around the same time when Eswatini approached the Republic of South Africa for a 2.4 billion bailout as liquidity problems engulfed the country. The crisis was so bad that the government was failing to meet some of its financial obligations such as payment for its suppliers and civil servant salaries.

An extract from a report by the African Development Bank (African Economic Outlook: 2018) observes that Eswatini's economic performance indicated by gross domestic product (GDP) growth, decreased by half of a percentage point from 3.0% in 2013 to 2.5% in 2014. The figures, according to the report, suggest that the country has not fully recovered from the fiscal crisis of 2011. All these reports point to a policy which was implemented in a country confronted by a fiscal deficit. For the longest time, Eswatini's fiscal depended on the revenue from the South African Customs Unions (SACU) involving South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini and Namibia. This revenue accounts to almost 43% of the annual national budget of Eswatini. According to Simelane (2014:253), the decline of the revenue from the Customs Union has seriously affected the fiscal structures of member states. Nxumalo and Hlophe (2018:2) informs of fiscal sustainability indicators reflecting a country which is on an unsustainable path with a primary gap and tax gap of about 7% of gross domestic product (GDP). They attribute this to public expenditures that are rising at a faster pace than revenues thereby rendering government deficits unsustainable in the medium term.

2.6.2 Legislated framework for free primary education

Perhaps it is important at this stage to identify the key legislated framework which gave effect to the FPE policy in Eswatini. Section 29(6) of the Constitution of 2005 provides that every Swazi child shall have a right to free education in public school. According to the Constitution, FPE was supposed to be implemented in 2009 but it was officially introduced in 2010. The FPE policy was implemented in 2010 beginning with the first and second grade and phased in on a staggered approach in the upcoming years.

The year 2011 saw the development of a policy framework that would serve as a guideline to the FPE policy of Eswatini. The Swaziland Education and Training Sector

Policy, issued in 2011, stated that the purpose of the policy was to ensure equitable access to inclusive, life-long quality education and training for all Swazi citizens through a sustained implementation and resourcing of a comprehensive training and education policy. The policy goes further to explain its goals as the provision of an equitable and inclusive education system that affords all learners access to free and compulsory basic education and senior secondary education of real quality, followed by opportunity to continue with life-long education and training. The policy is thus enhancing learners' personal development and contributing to Eswatini's cultural development, socio-economic growth and global competitiveness (Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training, 2011: iv).

However, as a concept, FPE dates to 1948. Article 26(1) of the United Nations Human Rights Declaration of 1948, declared education as a basic human right and that it shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages; implying that every child had a right to education (United Nations, 2015:54). Similarly, Article 13 2(a) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, declares that primary education shall be compulsory and available for free to all (ICESCR, 2015:20). FPE was intended to provide access to education to every learner, irrespective of his or her financial background.

According to Dlamini (2017:6), as a policy, FPE is commendable as a means of cushioning children from poor socio-economic backgrounds from failing to participate in education or dropping out of school because of financial strain. The provisions for free and compulsory education are the substance of the political pledges made under the Dakar framework adopted at the World Education Forum regarding the national Education for All (EFA) action plan. This framework made a clarion call to the effect that all countries should have achieved Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 (Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training, 2015). However, Mukeredzi (2009:48) submitted that the pressure to achieve FPE had adverse consequences on the economies of most developing countries, with most of them struggling to mobilise the necessary resources required to implement such a policy.

Eswatini is signatory to several international policies on universal education that provides for high quality basic education for all. The education for all commitment was demonstrated in Section 29(6) of the country's Constitution of 2005 which explicitly

accords every child, within three years of promulgation of the Constitution, a right to free education in all public schools – at least up to the end of primary level. Since then, a number of policies have been adopted by the government, all aimed at providing equal education opportunities to all children in the country. However, this provision was not enforced in Eswatini before the government was taken through a legal process by the Swaziland National Ex-mine Workers Association (Steyn, 2010:16). Subsequently, the year 2010 marked the implementation of the FPE policy in all public schools in Eswatini and the requirements for paying school fees was done away with for the Grade 1s and Grade 2s. The following six years saw an incremental roll out of this policy up to the last grade of primary school in 2016.

However, similar to most other countries which have adopted a free primary education policy, the implementation of FPE in Eswatini came along with its own challenges. From the onset, the Constitutional court challenge by the Eswatini National ex-miners Association of Eswatini, only granted FPE and not compulsory education as enshrined in the 1948 Human Rights Declaration and the Convention of the Right of the Child. The judgment indicated that every child attending primary school had the right to attend school free of charge, and that government had a constitutional obligation to provide FPE. The implication of this is that the policy enabled children who were not in school to enrol, resulting in a drastic increase in the enrolment rate of children in the system. Unfortunately, the government had no clear plan of dealing with the influx in terms of school infrastructure, teaching personnel and other learning enablers. In view of the expected increase in the enrolment of learners, concerns were raised on the quality of learning in public schools. As such, the implementation of this policy came on board while the government was unprepared for its consequences (Dlamini, 2017:76).

Zwane and Malale (2018:12-15) noted that the implementation of FPE in Eswatini in 2010 became a stimulus for the introduction of inclusive education in the mainstream schools. With this, all the teachers from public schools in the country were expected to be competent enough to teach learners with a wide range of educational needs. However, the teachers did not receive adequate staff development training ahead of the implementation of the policy, resulting the majority of teachers not being ready to mitigate the high influx of enrolments. Thus, the implementation of the policy unfolded against a government which was not capacitated to deal with its consequences.

In general, rural schools are negatively affected by the lack of resources and infrastructure. The Ka-Bhudla Primary School is among the rural public schools that were affected by the roll-out of FPE education in Eswatini. As a school located in the deep rural area of the Manzini region, the school struggled to attract the best trained and qualified teachers because of its location. The teachers demonstrated a higher percentage of formal training in urban areas compared to their rural counterparts. All these aspects are attributed to the government's lack of commitment in developing rural areas. The Ka-Bhudla Primary School indeed do not have the capacity to mitigate any risks associated with the FPE policy. A dire picture of the teaching and learning environment at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School is thus painted (Mushoriwa, 2014:10).

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter began by examining the relationship between public administration and the public education policy. This was followed by the definitions of key concepts that were used in the research. The chapter then described the theoretical foundations underlying this research which are the community of practice theory, the integrated systems theory, change management and stakeholder theory. The systems theory was identified to be the most appropriate theoretical framework for the research. What followed was an overview of free primary education policy in Africa, with Malawi, Kenya and Uganda provided as case studies and this led to the discussion of the free primary education policy of Eswatini. A brief history of the Kingdom of Eswatini and how it paved the way towards free primary education in the country was then provided. At the end of the chapter, the key legislative frameworks for free primary education of Eswatini were discussed and how they relate to the adoption of Universal Free Primary Education declared by the United Nations in 1948.

The following chapter will discuss the research design and methodology that will be applied in this research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of a detailed explanation of the research methodology adopted for this study, and is presented through descriptions of the research design, population and sampling techniques, data gathering instruments and an explanation on how the data was analysed. Important aspects to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings are also addressed. A description of ethical considerations concludes the chapter.

A case study method has been used because the study required a close up and in-depth analysis of a given case, in which data is collected, analysed and have the findings reported too. A qualitative research method was chosen to extract the opinions of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School on the effects of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy on education quality.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

One important component of research is to select the most appropriate research design that supports the research questions and assist fulfilling the objectives of the study (Hayes, Bonner & Douglas, 2013:165). Quantitative research and qualitative research are the two dominant methods commonly used by researchers. The aim in a quantitative study is to highlight objective measurements and the statistical mathematical or numerical examination of information/data obtained through polls, questionnaires, surveys, or by controlling existing statistical information using computational methods. The quantitative method is mainly used to determine the relationship factor (an independent variable) and another (a dependant variable) within a population (Neuman, 2014:36).

In contrast, Woodwell (2014:58) submits that qualitative research attempts to understand relationships underlying a particular single case or small number of events. He adds that, case studies are in fact the backbone of qualitative research used to inductively understand both what happened and why things happened. Therefore, to achieve the objectives outlined for this research, a qualitative method was employed

to get an in-depth understanding of how the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers perceive the effects of FPE on education quality of Eswatini. The purpose of this research was to understand the teachers' interpretation on what they believe could be the effects of FPE on the education quality in the country. The use of this approach enabled the researcher to draw information from participants. With that, the research design proved to be the most appropriate to conduct the research.

According to Salkind (2012:4), qualitative analysis is an active process of someone's thoughts to find patterns in data and be able to interpret their interrelationships. According to Cloete and Wissink (2007:137) the qualitative approach focuses on a range of variables including intangible and subjective interpretations of logic values, meanings, attitudes, relationships and understanding of social forces through a variety set of techniques. As such, a qualitative research with focus on a case study was employed in an attempt to adequately reach the main objective of the study, namely to understand the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The concept research methodology refers to the methods, strategies, techniques and instruments used to implement the research design (Babbie, 2016:104). The following research methodology brought about trustworthy and valid research findings and recommendations about the effective implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini.

3.3.1 Document analysis

In this study, the information obtained from the school records concerning the results recorded prior to the implementation of FPE policy as well as after the implementation of the policy, assisted in an attempt to find answers on the research question 'How do the first FPE graduates' average pass rate compare with previous years' results?'. These are records pertaining to the overall pass rate of the school between 2009 and 2019. In addition, key authors, articles, books, concepts and theories were identified to support existing arguments, form new opinions and formulate insights in the relationship between high enrolment of children in primary schools under free basic education and the quality of education.

3.3.2 Case study

This research was conducted at a primary school found in the Manzini region of Eswatini, the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Ebyenamini and Moghadam (2018:1-3) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Thus a case study research involves an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object that is being studied. The school selected is a public school located in a rural area within the central part of Eswatini and which forms part of those schools affected by the FPE policy at the beginning of 2010.

For this research, the participants were the school principal and eight teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School who raised their views to achieve the aim of the research. As such, the results obtained from the data collected at the selected primary school is presumed to be a true representation of the prevailing views of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School on the effects of FPE on the education quality in Eswatini. Permission was sought and obtained from the school principal to conduct the interviews with the teachers of the school.

3.3.3 Empirical research

Harris and Brown (2010:11) defined empirical research as a research method that involves the use of standardised questionnaires and/or interviews in a systematic manner to gather data about participants and their preferences, thoughts, opinions, perceptions and behaviours. The semi-structured interviews utilised in this study is elaborated on in section 3.5 below (*Data gathering instrument*).

The research path of the study is summarised in the following table:

Table 3.1: Representation of the research path

<p>PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:</p> <p>To obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini to eventually establish the extent to which the implementation of the FPE policy has achieved or compromised the expected standard.</p>

<p>STEP ONE:</p> <p>General introduction: To provide the rationale for conducting the research. (Chapter 1)</p>
<p>STEP TWO:</p> <p>Conceptualise education, public education policy, free primary education, quality education and public policy, as well Contextualising what constitutes free primary education policy in Africa and particularly in Eswatini. Method: Systematic literature review</p> <p>Objective 1:</p> <p>To conduct a literature review will be conducted to determine what constitutes education quality in public primary schools. (Chapter 2)</p>
<p>STEP THREE:</p> <p>Ethics clearance: Ethics clearance approval granted (8 March 2019) Research design and methodology: Qualitative methods research design Data gathering instrument: Semi-structured personal interviews, conducted online Participants in interviews: Principal and teachers Approach: Deductive – from broader general perspective to the specific case</p> <p>Objective 2:</p> <p>To determine the most appropriate research design and methodology to study the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini. (Chapter 3)</p>
<p>STEP FOUR:</p> <p>Data collection, data analysis and findings</p> <p>Objective 3:</p> <p>To analyse the views of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality</p> <p>Objective 4:</p> <p>To critically evaluate the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy.</p> <p>Objective 5:</p> <p>To compare the first FPE graduates' results with previous years' results. (Chapter 4)</p>
<p>STEP FIVE:</p> <p>Conclusions and recommendations</p> <p>Objective 6:</p> <p>To make conclusions and recommendations about the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini. (Chapter 5)</p>

The research population and sampling techniques applicable to this study are discussed in the following section.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

As hinted above, the study was conducted with teachers from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School who have taught at the school for at least the past five years. The sampled teachers were purposely chosen based on their experience in the teaching and learning processes prior to and after the introduction of the FPE policy at the school. Salkind (2012:71) defined a sample as a subset of a population. In the same text, he offered a definition of a population as the total number of all individuals who have certain characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. For that reason, the researcher interviewed eight teachers from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School as well as the principal of the school. The results from the sample may be generalisable and made applicable to the experiences of all the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

Table 4.2: Population and sample size

Target group	Nature of Group involved	Site population (how many people?)	Sample size	Age category of group
Group 1	Principal and/or deputy principal	1 principal, or 1 deputy-principal	1	Older than 16, but younger than 65
Group 2	Teachers	16 teachers	8	Older than 16, but younger than 65

The sampling method employed for this research is a purposive sampling method. Salkind (2012:78) defined purposive sampling method as a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own discernment when choosing members of a population in the research. The researcher examines for certain qualities possessed by a sample with focus on a particular purpose. With that, the researcher holds a firm belief that the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School who were selected to participate in this research, provided a representative view of an average

teachers' perspectives on the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in Eswatini. The teachers in Group 2 have been employed by the school before 2010.

The reason for the inclusion of each participant group is because the school principal and deputy principal are the heads of administration at the school. The school principal is the custodian of all performance results recorded prior and after the implementation of free primary education. The teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School are excellently placed to tell whether the introduction of FPE has any bearing on education quality as they are the primary implementers of the FPE policy. Preference was given to teachers who were employed before 2010 so that they can report on any changes observed since the implementation of the FPE policy.

The principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School played an active role in providing permission to conduct the research and in identifying subjects and the participants. The principal was also present when the performance records of the learners were studied to determine general trends in the pass rate.

3.5 DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENT

Semi-structured interviews that remained focused on the aim of the research was used in generating data. The interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to explain freely how they feel about the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini. For Cishe (2017:77) this method is efficient as the questions may be repeated or re-phrased if unclear and until saturation is reached. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), saturation may be defined as 'a state beyond the point regarded as necessary or desirable. In this study, online interviews were indeed conducted until all the research questions have been answered sufficiently. Prior to the actual research interviews, the researcher read an opening statement which placed the participants in a relaxed and trusting atmosphere before proceeding to the research questions.

The following questions were posed to the teachers:

- *How long have you been a teacher at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?*

The purpose of this question was to ensure that interviews are conducted with teachers who have been teaching at Ka-Bhudla Primary School for at least the

past five years. The reason for this selection is that the study requires participants who have taught at a public primary school before and after the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini. The assumption is that such teachers would have a better understanding of the effects of the policy on education quality since they were present throughout the roll out of the policy. The selection of the participants proved to be efficient because the researcher was able to retrieve sufficient information from participants due to their vast knowledge of the matter under consideration.

- *In your view what are the changes in the learning process following the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?*

The purpose of this question was to source information from the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School of any fundamental changes they have experienced in learning processes following the implementation of FPE in Eswatini. As the primary implementers of the FPE policy, the teachers are in a better position to respond to this question as first-hand witness on any changes that might have occurred after the implementation.

- *What constitutes quality education in your view?*

The purpose of this question was to get the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on their understanding of quality education. The question was posed to ascertain the comprehension of the teachers on the concept of quality education and whether they can determine whenever it has been compromised or enhanced by the implementation of the FPE policy.

- *How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?*

This question emanates from the reports which indicate an increase in the enrolment of learners at Eswatini primary schools following the implementation of the FPE policy. The purpose was to grant the teachers an opportunity to voice their observations on the impact of the reported influx on the teaching and learning processes. The participants also had an opportunity to indicate if the increased enrolments had any bearing on reaching the outcomes of the curriculum.

- *What is your view concerning the implementation of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?*

This was an open-ended question where the teachers were requested to provide their overall impression of the FPE policy of Eswatini. The purpose was to understand the teachers' view on the policy as a whole; looking into its successes, limitations together with any policy alterations or improvements which may be considered to achieve the desired purpose. The teachers' responses enabled the researcher to craft informed conclusions and recommendations concerning FPE policy, as included in Chapter 5.

The questions for the school principal and/or the deputy principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School included:

- *How long have you been a principal or deputy principal at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?*

The purpose of this question was to ensure interviews are conducted with a principal or deputy principal who has been at Ka-Bhudla Primary School for at least the past five years. The reason for this selection is that the study requires participants who have taught at a public primary school before and after the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini. The teachers had an excellent understanding of the effects of the policy on education quality. The selection of the participants proved to be efficient because the researcher was able to retrieve sufficient information from participants due to their vast knowledge of the matter under consideration.

- *What is your view on the implementation of the FPE education at the school?*

As the chief administrator of the school, this question was meant to source the sentiments of the principal on the implementation of the FPE policy against the set objectives. Accordingly, this question enabled the principal to voice any facts based on experience with the policy which include possible negative effects it might have had on the overall performance of the school.

- *Are there any changes on the overall performance of the school following the introduction of FPE?*

Assuming that any shift in policy is likely to result in a different outcome, the purpose of this question was to learn from the principal about any observed changes in the performance of the school following the implementation of the FPE policy. The change sought was in respect of the recorded performance grades of the learners prior and after the implementation of the policy.

- *Are there any effects on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of FPE?*

The purpose of this question was to ascertain from the principal of any impact this policy has had on quality education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. As someone responsible for the management of the teachers and the efficient provision of learning materials, the principal was well placed to answer this question.

- *How would you explain the rate of turn over for teachers following the implementation of FPE?*

The purpose of this question was to establish the link between the reported increased enrolment of learners following the implementation of the FPE policy at Ka-Bhudla Primary School and the number of teachers available to mitigate the influx. This question enabled the researcher to ascertain the observation highlighted in section 2.5 (*Overview of primary education policy in Africa*) in Chapter 2 of whether the school experienced any staff turnover during this period and if it has, how has it impacted on the delivery of quality education at the school.

- *How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?*

The purpose of this question was to source the view of the principal basing from experience and in light of everything that is currently obtaining at the school the measures which can be put in place in maintaining acceptable quality education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

The framework for the interview questions is summarised in the following table. Although the framework informed the design and contents of the interview questions, the responses were not limited thereto, and the participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers.

Table 4.3: Framework for data gathering

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS		RESEARCH AIM/ OBJECTIVE	RESEARCH QUESTION	SECTION IN LITERATURE REVIEW
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL	TEACHERS			
<p>How long have you been a principal or deputy principal at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?</p> <p>What is your view on the implementation of the FPE education at the school?</p>	<p>How long have you been a teacher at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?</p> <p>What is your view concerning the implementation of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?</p>	To obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.	What effects did the FPE policy have on the quality of education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1, Section 1.4.1: <i>Free primary education policy in Eswatini</i>
Are there any changes on the overall performance of the school following the introduction of FPE?	In your view what are the changes in the learning process following the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?	To critically evaluate the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy.	What were the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2, Section 2.3.8: <i>Learning process</i>
Are there any effects on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of FPE?	What constitutes quality education in your view?	To conduct a literature review to determine what constitutes education quality in public primary schools.	What constitutes education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1: <i>Quality education in public primary schools</i>

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS		RESEARCH AIM/ OBJECTIVE	RESEARCH QUESTION	SECTION IN LITERATURE REVIEW
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL	TEACHERS			
How would you explain the rate of turn over for teachers following the implementation of FPE?	How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?	To make conclusions and recommendations about the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini.	What are the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on how to maintain education quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2, Section 2.5: <i>Overview of free primary education policy in Africa</i>
How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?	How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?	To establish how to maintain education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.		

The first research objective of the study, namely: to conduct a literature review to determine what constitutes education quality in public primary schools, is not included in the table above because it was fully achieved in Chapter 2 (*Literature Review*). Also, the research question ‘What is the most appropriate research design and approach to study the primary teachers’ point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini?’ was fully achieved in Chapter 3 (*Research Design and Methodology*). The fifth objective, namely: to compare the first FPE graduates’ average pass rate with previous years’ results as well as the research question ‘How do the first FPE graduates’ pass rate compare with previous years’ results?’ were fully achieved in Chapter 4, section 4.4 (*Document analysis and findings*).

The data collected is interpreted in a manner that it gives an understanding of the teachers’ perspectives on the effects of FPE on the quality of education in Eswatini. Permission to the school’s results was obtained on request for analysis. The results of the first FPE graduates were compared to results of previous years at Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The data generated interpreted such that it provided an understanding on whether or not any trends exist between the results and in turn that assisted in answering the research question.

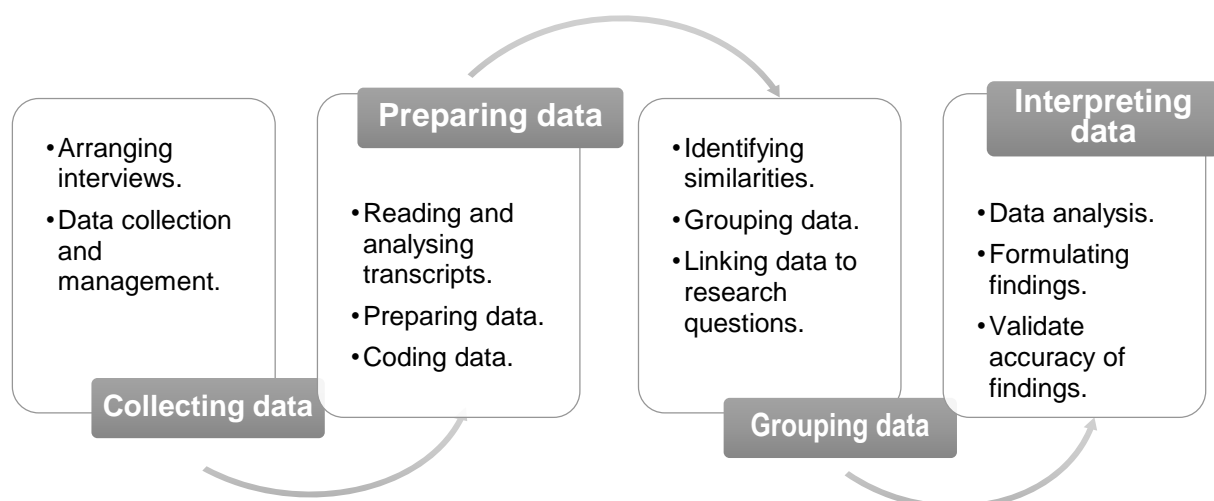
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Significant at this stage is to provide a precise account on how data analysis was undertaken to interpret the information gathered on data collection. According to Rogelberg (2002:168) data analysis involves extracting textual data from transcripts, field notes and reports. According to Cloete and Wissink (2007:214) the main objective of data analysis is to transform raw input data which is in the form of figures, observations, perceptions and findings through contextualised interpretations that attach meaning to those input data into value-added output data that provide insight and understanding into the case under consideration. For Cloete and Wissink (2007:149), within a qualitative research design, data analysis is aimed at describing and contextualising events and phenomena through the use of qualitative logic in order to interpret, understand, explain and/or predict other events in future.

Accordingly, qualitative data analysis method was used to analyse data. The data collected was interpreted in a manner that it gives an understanding of the teachers’

perspectives on the effects of FPE on the quality of education in Eswatini. As a consequence of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in the Eswatini and the whole world, the research moved from data collection through face to face interviews to telephone calls, emails and other electronic platforms. Detailed notes were taken by the researcher from the returned questionnaires and recordings, and these were transcribed and studied to compare the text data against the responses as part of the data validation process. The text was then divided into segments of information before they were labelled with codes.

After formulating the draft findings, text data was checked for accuracy by revisiting the original transcripts and comparing it once more with the field-notes. A simplified overview of the process of validating the qualitative data is illustrated below:



Source: Adopted from Yin (2010:177-179).

3.7 QUALITATIVE SOUNDNESS – TRUSTWORTHINESS

In any qualitative study evaluating the quality of research is essential if findings are to be generalised in practice and ensure their trustworthiness. This means that if scientific research is done, it can be repeated using identical or similar conditions. If

scientific research is repeated and it is discovered that similar results are obtained, it will be considered reliable and can be generalised only to participants. For this research caution was taken to ensure that results are reliable and depicts the true picture of what is currently obtaining on the ground. The study can be said to be credible because the researcher collected authentic data and use them to arrive at conclusions and recommendations. With that, the research will ensure trustworthiness by that the data and findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable.

3.7.1 Credibility

A credible research is one which demonstrates unbiased, backed up evidence and credible sources. Hence this study can be classified as credible because the researcher collected authentic data and used them to arrive at conclusions and recommendations. The researcher did not coerced participants to provide any information. The information provided by participants was all voluntary and the interviews were sourced from teachers of a public school in Eswatini of which is what the study intended to achieve.

3.7.2 Transferability

From a qualitative study perspective transferability refers to the degree in which the results of a research can be generalised or transferred to another similar context or circumstances. It is for that reason that a public school which implemented the Free Primary Education policy was chosen in Eswatini to ensure that findings from the research can be applicable to similar populations.

3.7.3 Dependability

The concept of dependability denotes that the study could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be consistent. This means that if scientific research is done, it can be repeated using identical or similar conditions. If scientific research is repeated and it is discovered that similar results are obtained, it will be considered reliable and can be generalised only to participants. For this research caution was taken to ensure that the findings are reliable and depicts the true picture of what is happening in real-life. A recording device was used to capture the views of

the Ka-Bhudla primary teachers, and this was to ensure that all responses are captured accurately for results to be more realistic as they can be.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The research fitted in the protocols of conducting a scientific study as it followed on the proposal that was approved by the Department of Public Administration and Management. All mandatory procedures were taken including obtaining the relevant approval from the University of South Africa ethics committee and permission to conduct research from relevant authorities, which in this case is the Principal from Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Moreover, the research provides a paper trail and audit trail which highlights every step of data analysis that was made to provide a rationale for the outcomes of the research.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conscientious research ethics is mandatory for an acceptable academic study. The principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School played an active role in providing permission to conduct the research and in identifying subjects and the participants. The principal provided the contact details of the selected teachers. The principal further played an active role in identifying relevant subjects and also identify well-informed teachers as they work together.

Details of the study were included in the participant information letter that was provided to all the participants. Participation was voluntary and the participants were made aware that they may decline to answer any of the questions and may withdraw from the study at any time. All information provided by the participants is considered confidential and the data received will serve no other purpose than purely for academic research. The participants were not compensated to participate in the study. In consultation with the school principal suitable weeks were selected for the online interviews. The consenting participants were further requested to sign a consent form to participate in the research process before the interviewing process commenced. The researcher did not use any tactics to influence the participants to participate in the study.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study espoused and employed the qualitative research method to excavate and placed into context the perceptions of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on the effects of free primary education policy of Eswatini on education quality in the country. One of the study's main assumptions was that the excessive enrolment of primary school learners responding to the introduction of free primary education might have a negative impact on the quality of education in public schools in the country. In this chapter the research design and methodology applied to perform the research project was explained in detail. Sections covered included the research design, population size, research sample, data collection instruments as well as data analysis. The chapter also made mention of the concept of trustworthiness and concluded by addressing ethical considerations as it relates to the study.

The following chapter will present the data analysis and interpretation of the data collected, including the findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data analysis and provides a description of the findings of this study. The findings were obtained from the analysis of qualitative data that was collected from the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School in Eswatini, on the effects of implementing Free Primary Education (FPE) Policy in Eswatini Public Primary Schools.

To reach the main purpose of the research, namely to obtain the teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, the data collected from the interviews was thematically analysed. The strategy comprises a process of locating themes from the data collected in which relevance to the following research question exists:

- What constitutes education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini?
- What were the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy?
- What effects did the FPE policy have on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
- What are the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on how to maintain education quality?
- How do the first FPE graduates' pass rate compare with previous years' results?

The approach enabled the researcher to establish the extent to which the implementation of the FPE policy has maintained or increased the quality of education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017 3352).

The principal of the school was interviewed first, through an online interview with the responses recorded. Online interviews with eight teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary

School then followed. The researcher continued with the interviews until saturation was reached. In addition, school documents which contain school records of the school's pass rates were used to find answers on how the first FPE graduates' average pass rate compare with previous years' results.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

The proposed data gathering instrument for the study were semi-structured interviews with the principal and teachers of Ka-Bhudla Primary School. This data collection technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher sufficient time to retrieve information from the participants until all the interview and research questions were answered completely. However, the scheduled time of the interviews with the teachers from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School coincided with the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus disease in December 2019 (COVID-19). Eswatini, like the rest of the world, became one of the countries affected by the devastating effects of the virus.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines COVID-19 as an infectious respiratory disease caused by a new virus that spreads from person to person. On March 11, 2020 the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Following this declaration, the government of Eswatini announced a nationwide partial lockdown with citizens expected to observe social distancing and the closing of all schools. This development meant that face to face interviews were no longer possible since the teachers were not readily available to honour invitations for data collection. It is in this context that the researcher explored alternative online data collection instruments which would sufficiently retrieve information from the participants almost similar to how semi-structured interviews would have assisted. The adjustments to data collection methods limited the risks to the researchers of breaking Covid-19 regulations and prevented putting the researcher at risk of contracting or spreading the virus. The researcher abided by the COVID-19 guidelines of Unisa (University of South Africa, 2020:1-5).

With the new prevailing circumstances, the research questions along with the informed consent declarations were sent to the participants through the use of emails and the MS Teams electronic platforms. Follow up telephone calls were also made to ensure that the participants understood all the questions clearly and their right of consent was explained. The participants agreed to online interviews and they were requested to answer the interview questions adequately. The participants responded to the

interview schedules through the same platform, and no lockdown laws and lockdown level restrictions were transgressed.

4.3 ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS AND FINDINGS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

The aim of the study was to obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on education quality in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The participants had a clear understanding of what the FPE policy is and what it seeks to achieve. The participants knew what quality education is, and the elements which should be in place to ensure its manifestation. Moreover, the participants were able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the alienable rights of the learners to basic education. The participants also appreciated education as an instrument of social change.

The significance of demographic data lies in its contribution to refine the analysis of the research specific questions. The respondents were eighteen years and older, but not older than sixty-five. Each participant was requested to answer the interview questions 'How long have you been a principal or deputy principal or a teacher at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School? All the participants have been employed at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School for five years and more. This inspired confidence in their expert views and trustworthiness of the collected data and the accompanied findings.

4.3.1 Quality education in public primary schools in Eswatini

As stated in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1 (*Quality education in public administration*), education should be fit for purpose in terms of the curriculum, teaching plans and the education level of the teachers. Without doubt, learners' skills, attitudes and knowledge also influence quality education. Other critical aspects include school infrastructure and supporting study material (UNICEF, 2000:4). The interview question 'What is your view on the implementation of the FPE education at the school?' posted to the school principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School therefore sought to establish what constitutes education quality in public primary schools in Eswatini. The individual teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School were requested to respond to the interview question 'What constitutes quality education in your view?',

All the participants, including the school principal and the teachers, agreed that the appointment of sufficient teachers and advanced teachers' skills and knowledge are essential requirements for quality education. Being understaffed and appointing teachers with a lack of knowledge of the subjects being taught, jeopardise quality education. The school principal particularly mentioned the availability of teaching aids and teaching plans as essentials at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. She also mentioned an effective school management structure. The majority of the teachers highlighted that the teaching and learning environment must be suitable for learning the curriculum. The consensus was that the optimal application and efficiency of all these components would guarantee quality education in public schools. When requested to clarify further, one of the teachers stated that the availability of adequate, qualified and motivated teachers is one of the key components for the realisation of quality education. When asked what is meant by *adequate* teachers, the teacher mentioned compliance to the national benchmark of learner-teacher ratio of 40 learners per teacher. The teachers described an enabling environment for learning as an environment that allows the free exchange of ideas without any intimidation and frustration. The school principal highlighted that the needs of the learners, including those with special needs, like impaired learners, learners with reading difficulties, chronic diseases, limbs or diabetes, are also catered for. These arguments are in line with the statement by Zwane and Malale (2018:4-8) that teachers play an essential role in quality education.

With regard to teaching aids, the majority of the teachers insisted that quality education would only thrive in a situation whereby all the learners own basic learning materials such as exercise books, a pencil or pen and a ruler. The explained that the learning materials must be complemented by sufficient stationary for the teachers as well as applicable experiment equipment where applicable.

The school principal interpreted the role of the school management as that of an overseer of the day to day operations of the school. The school management body would be tasked with ensuring that discipline and order is maintained both in the classrooms and in the staffroom. This can only be achieved through the prioritisation of the learners' and teachers' welfare within the school premises and ensuring that teachers have everything they need to execute their duties effectively. Regrettably,

reference to innovative entrepreneurship by school management was lacking in the conversations with the principal and the teachers.

Summary of findings

Based on the opinions held by the principal and the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, it is found that:

- The optimal use and efficiency of the teachers, teaching aids, teaching plans and a teaching and learning environment suitable for learning of the curriculum and an effective school management structure would guarantee quality education.
- Maintaining the national benchmark of learner-teacher ratio of 40 learners per teacher would also enable quality education.
- The availability and accessibility to learning materials and equipment by the learners and teachers would simplify the delivery of quality education.
- Unfortunately, none of the interviewees made reference to the use of tablets, laptops and e-applications as learning materials. No-one mentioned online teaching platforms despite the drastic increase in online teaching and learning in recent years.

4.3.2 Perceptions of teachers of the FPE policy

The interview question ‘What is your view concerning the implementation of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?’ was asked to find solutions to the main research question: ‘According to the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, what effects did the implementation of the FPE policy have on education quality?’ With regard to the teachers’ perceptions on the FPE policy, the findings recorded opposing views among the participants. The majority of teachers observed the FPE policy in a good light, particularly its attempt to afford learners from poor backgrounds access to basic education. Vulnerable learners who were struggling with school fees are able to divert those funds to other essentials, like school uniforms, after the implementation of the FPE policy.

Supporters of the FPE policy highlighted the fact that free primary education fosters equality at schools. Various claims were made that all learners now have access to the same quality of education irrespective of their families' social standing. It was highlighted by the school principal that this aspect becomes a psychological booster to the learners since they view themselves as equals. Overall, the FPE policy is commended by the teachers because of its ability to level the ground where everyone has an equal opportunity to excel.

The school principal highlighted in the interview that, from a social perspective, it must be noted that the Government of Eswatini is providing food to the learners in public schools. She confirmed that this initiative enable children from poor backgrounds who were sitting at home (probably without food) because of a lack of funds, could now access educational resources at no personal expenses. This argument is in line with the statement from Dlamini (2017:6) that the FPE policy is a means of cushioning children from poor socio-economic backgrounds from failing to participate in education or dropping out of school because of financial strain, as confirmed in Chapter 2, section 2.6.2 (*Legislated framework for free primary education*).

However, there was also a noticeable negative view detected among the individual teachers as the majority of them hinted that the introduction of the FPE policy was done prematurely. The main argument was that before the implementation of the FPE policy, a high number of systems were not in place to bear such a resource consuming policy. To support this point, more than one of the teachers raised the issue of infrastructure which was inadequate to accommodate the massive increase of learner enrolments. Inadequate learning aids, a shortage of school furniture and a lack of teacher recruitment were listed as possible causes for a decline in quality education. The principal said that “*a major let-down of this policy*”, is the issue of understaffing and insufficient grants provided by the government. Fundamentally, the main negative view gathered from the qualitative data was that the government introduced a policy ill prepared of its financial implications.

It was confirmed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3 (*Theory of change management*), that according to the change management theory, teachers and school administrators need to be brought on board before the implementation of the FPE policy so to prepare them on the changes expected upon implementation of the policy. Interestingly, the

issue of non-consultation prior to the implementation on the FPE policy did not arise from the teachers or the principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Unlike the study conducted by Mushoriwa, *et al.* (2016:149), which noted a negative attitude from teachers towards the introduction of FPE largely because teachers were not consulted, as confirmed Chapter 2, section 2.6.2 (*Legislated framework for free primary education*).

Summary of findings

Based on the opinions held by the principal and the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, it is found that:

- The FPE policy affords learners from poor backgrounds to access basic education and fosters equality at schools.
- The initiative to provide food for learners in public schools enable children from poor backgrounds to access educational resources at no personal expenses.
- Unfortunately, the school infrastructure is inadequate to support the high increase in learner enrolments.
- Inadequate learning aids, a shortage of school furniture and a lack of teacher recruitment are some of the reasons for a decline in quality education in the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.
- Furthermore, schools are understaffed due to a hold on teacher appointments.

4.3.3 Changes brought about by the introduction of FPE

The implementation of the FPE policy resulted in all public primary schools to experience a change in the manner in which they were run. As alluded in the above sections, the changes came in the form of severe increased enrolments of learners and the need for new infrastructure to mitigate the demands that the influx evoked. Indeed, the principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School did not hesitate to confirm that there were key changes brought about by the introduction of FPE when responded to the interview question 'Are there any changes on the overall performance of the school following the introduction of FPE?'. The principal drew the researcher to the fact that when this policy came into effect, there were no guidelines or restrictions in admissions. As a result, many learners with no previous educational background enrolled at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The administration had no record of how

much school experience these children had, hence it happened that they were placed in classes/grades they did not belong in. Unfortunately, children who could not previously afford any education, had to be placed in lower grades ... with children eight years younger than them.

From a positive revelation, the principal indicated that following the introduction of the FPE policy, there has been a decline in absenteeism from learners. No debt of school fees resulted in a psychological boost and motivation to some learners to regular attend school and to improve their marks since the humiliation of non-payment of fees has been eradicated through full payments by the government.

To fully answer the research question 'What were the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy?' each teacher was asked 'In your view what are the changes in the learning process following the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?' In accordance with what the study established when reviewing literature in Chapter 2, section 2.5 (*Overview of free primary education policy in Africa*), all eight teachers agreed that, following the implementation of the FPE policy, a surge in the enrolment of learners per class arose. The majority of the teachers confirmed that classrooms that were built for 30 learners to sit comfortably in, were packed with three times more the acceptable number. This increase has seen the learner-teacher ratio to increase to at least 55 learners per teacher, far above the national benchmark of 40 learners per teacher.

The implementation of the FPE policy implied that the learners were no longer required to pay tuition fees themselves as that became the responsibility of government. With regard to negative changes, the majority of the teachers highlighted that the new arrangement of schools relying on the government's financial support, was marred by the school's own challenges. For example, the government grant was, and is not sufficient to cover most of the school's operational costs which were previously covered by the learners' tuition fees before the implementation of the policy. The participants further alleged that there was, and currently is, always a delay in the disbursing of funds, to such an extent that the school will find itself running without learning aids for the most part of the year. These arguments correspond with the teacher's remarks when asked 'What is your view concerning the implementation of

FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?', as described in directly above section 4.3.2 *Perceptions of teachers of the FPE policy*.

Summary of findings

The research question 'What were the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy?' was fully answered by the responses from the participants. Below is a summary of the findings:

- Drastic increase in learner enrolment.
- Schools relying on the government's financial support.
- Delays in the disbursing of funds negatively affected the Ka-Bhudla Primary School because needed learning aids could not (and cannot) be acquired.
- Unfortunately, some of the learners were placed in classes/grades that they did not belong in due to a lack of information and schools records.
- A decline in absenteeism was experienced and the learners became much more competitive and motivated to pass their grades.

4.3.4 Consequences of increased learner enrolment

According to the participants, the increased enrolment of learners has brought some challenges in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. A noticeable change was the overcrowding of classrooms. As a result, the classrooms lack enough and suitable furniture to accommodate every learner in the classes. When asked about the consequence of overcrowded classrooms, one of the teachers pointed to the difficulty of providing individual feedback in an overfull and noisy classroom. The lack of individual attention to diverse students regrettably adversely affects learners with special needs: resulting in a decline in quality education.

One of the teachers pointed to the fact that the crowded classrooms led to a shift in the method of learning. Learners are tasked with more homework instead of classwork since there is limited time for in-class assessments and feedback. However, as it will become clear in below Table 4.1 (*Performance of Ka-Bhudla Primary School between 2010 and 2017*), challenges like limited feedback and increased homework, were overcome as reflected in the improved examination results. The teacher stated that the curriculum is examination orientated. However, it is challenging for teachers of the

Ka-Bhudla primary to provide quality individual assistance. Consequently, limited feedback leads to poor results.

The school principal was also asked 'Are there any effects on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of FPE? She indicated that teachers are no longer able to attend to all the academic challenges of the learners. This is caused by the fact that learners have different needs and a crowded class does not afford an opportunity to attend to individual needs.

The study further found that the massive enrolment of learners was met with another problem, namely under-staffing of teachers in the school. When asked the question during the personal interviews 'How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?' the teachers individually shared and confirmed that the teacher-learner ratio increased tremendously and it resulted in heavier workload for the teachers. A need for additional teachers was and is evident. Regrettably, there is no immediate solution to fast-track the appointment of appropriately skilled and knowledgeable teachers. This situation was confirmed by the principal when asked 'How would you explain the rate of turn over for teachers following the implementation of FPE?'. She revealed that the teacher turnover in the school is moderate since government introduced a new recruitment policy. The principal also mentioned that because of financial constraints, the government through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has frozen the employment of new teachers and only replaces those who leave the service through natural attrition.

Summary of findings

In summary, the answers to the interview questions 'Are there any effects on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of FPE?' and 'How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?' directly respond to the main research question: 'According to the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, what effects did the implementation of the FPE policy have on education quality?' Below is a summary of the main findings:

- The main problem encountered was the overcrowding of classrooms.
- A lack of feedback and individual attention to diverse students resulted from the overcrowded classrooms.
- The increased teacher-learner ratio resulted in more workload for the teachers.
- The teachers were no longer able to attend to all the academic problems of the learners which negatively affected the real-life experiences of the learners.
- Crowded classrooms have led to a shift on the method of teaching and learning where learners are tasked with more homework instead of classwork.

As described in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2 (*Integrated systems theory*), a system is a collection or set of things that are related in such a way that the collection behaves in a characteristic way. It was also confirmed that a public institution may be viewed as a system consisting of inputs, processes, outputs, feedback and the environment (Van der Waldt, 2016:68). The negative aspects raised by the interviewees may indeed be applied as components of a system.

Based on the integrated systems theory, the findings on the effects of the implementation of the FPE policy at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School can be illustrated as follows:

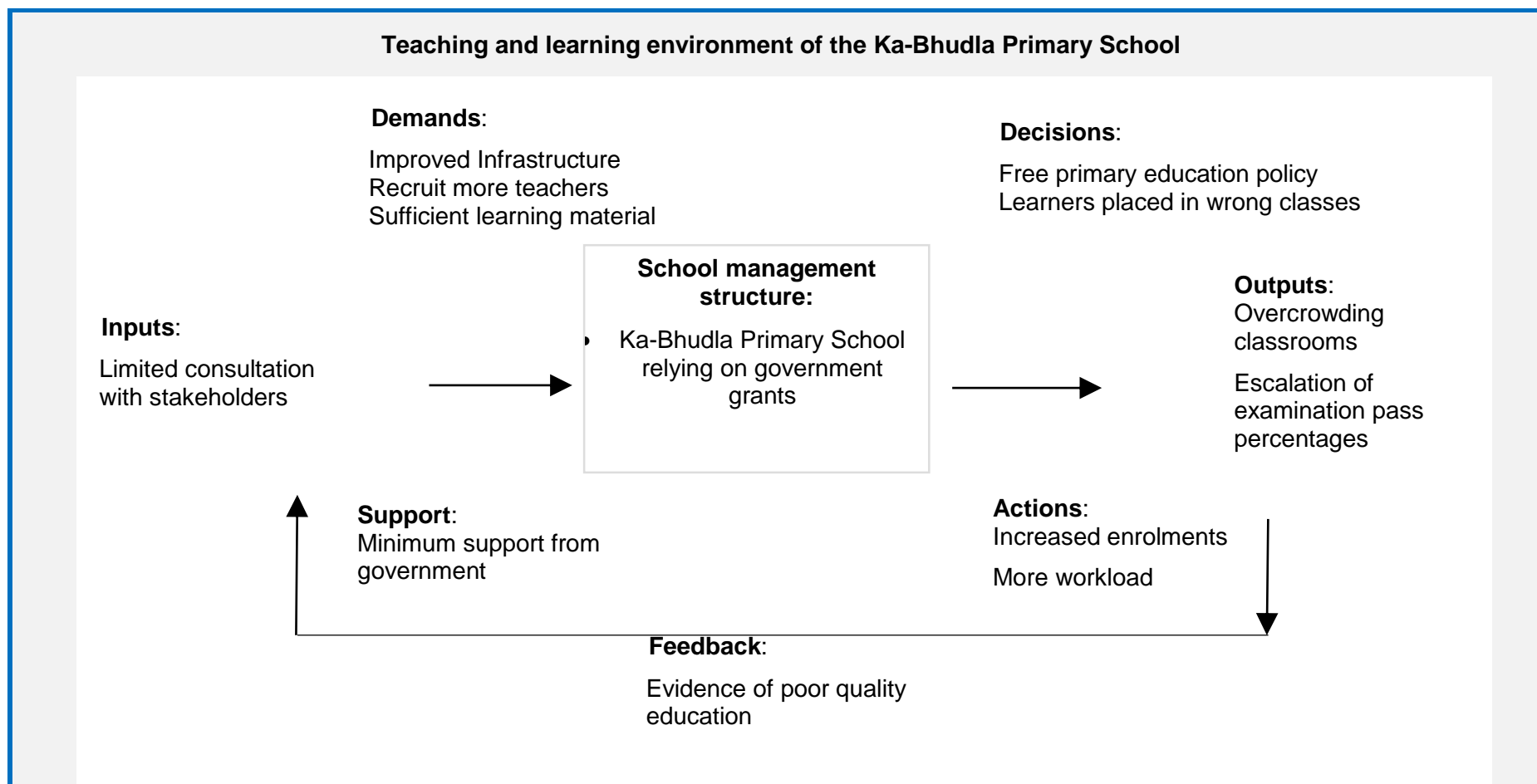


Figure 4.1: Integrated systems theory: Effects of the implementation of the FPE policy in the Ka-Bhudla Primary School

Source: Author's own interpretation

4.3.5 Maintaining quality education

As stated in Chapter 2, section 2.3.4 (*Quality education*) quality education contemplates aspects such as, what is taught, how it is taught, to which learners and in what setting. Quality education results in the development to the physical, intellectual, moral and social fields of a learner (Saxena, *et al.*: 2009:182). To seek clarity on how to maintain quality education and to answer the research question 'What are the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on how to maintain education quality?', the principal and the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School were individually asked to respond to the question 'How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?'. Various stances were brought forward by the participants on how quality education can be maintained in public schools. It is interesting that the majority of the participants immediately again shared their concerns about the shortage of teachers at the school and the negative effects thereof, like their burdened workload.

The principal confirmed that the government needs to reverse its current decision of the freezing of teacher employment, and claimed again that understaffing has a detrimental effect on the learning processes. The principal is convinced that the hiring of suitable teachers will maintain quality education.

Three of the teachers hinted that there should be a review of the curriculum to lessen the load of homework. An internal audit of the ancillary sources and skills needed to meet the needs of special learners should also be conducted. This should go along with regular teacher professional training and development in the form of workshops to enhance teachers with skills on how to cater for the needs of all learners.

In addition, infrastructure development in the school was mentioned as one of the key areas which the participants believed should be prioritised to accommodate the influx of learners in schools. Good school infrastructure improves the well-being of learners and gets the children motivated to come to school, this in turn improve the attendance and interest of learners in learning. The teachers suggested that new classes needed to be built complimented by new furniture in the form of studying desks and chairs to avoid overcrowding.

Summary of findings

In summary, the answers received during the personal interviews provided insight to the research question 'What are the views of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers on how to maintain education quality?.

Below is a summary of the findings on how to maintain quality education:

- Hiring of more teachers.
- Regular reviews of the education curriculum.
- Teacher professional development training on ancillary skills to meet the needs of diverse students.
- Infrastructure re-development to accommodate the high influx of learners.

4.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As alluded in Chapter 3, section 3.3.1 (*Document analysis*), the first FPE graduates' average pass rate of 2016 have been compared with the results of 2010 to 2017 to draw a conclusion on whether or not the introduction of the FPE policy has any bearing on the overall performance of the school. This comparison was necessary in order to answer the research question: 'How do the first FPE graduates' pass rate compare with previous years' results? The period 2010 to 2017 is appropriate for comparison purposes because the first beneficiaries of the FPE graduated in 2016.

Through the assistance of the principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, records pertaining to past pass rate information were sourced from the Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA). ECESWA is a quasi-government body with a mandate to administer examinations and to issue certificates to primary, junior and secondary school graduates. The Eswatini education system conducts primary schools' national exit examinations for all grade sevens in the country, through what is known as the Eswatini Primary Certificate Examinations (EPC). ECASWA is responsible for the quality assessment of these examinations and issues certificates of the EPC together with Junior Certificate (JC) examinations (grade ten) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education examination (IGCSE); which is equivalent to grade 12 matric examination in South Africa. The first beneficiaries of the FPE graduated in

2016. To date, in 2021, the FPE policy has been phased in into all the grades of public primary schools in Eswatini.

The following table is an extract from the ECESWA's statistics showing grade seven results of Ka-Bhudla Primary school from 2010 to 2017. The results displayed depict the passing rate before, during and after the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary school in 2010.

Table 4.1: Performance of Ka-Bhudla Primary School between 2010 and 2017

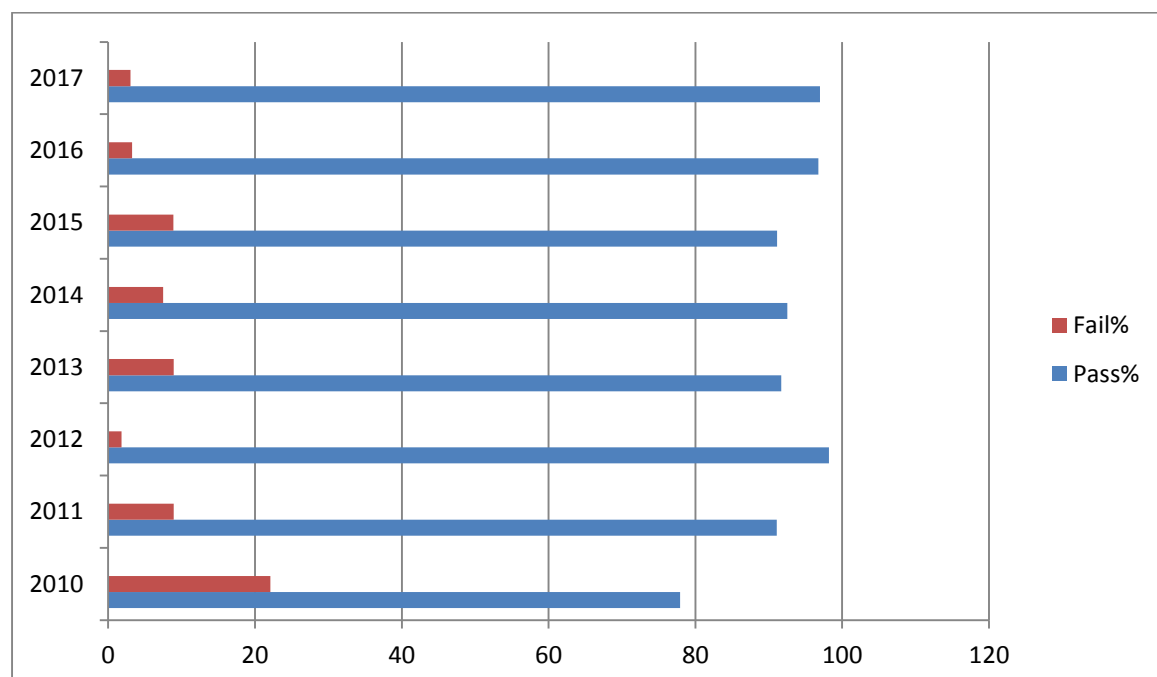
Year	Merit (76% - 100%)	1st Class (66% - 75)	2nd Class (56% - 65%)	3rd Class (45% - 55%)	Fail (0% - 44%)	Pass %	Fail %
2010	0	1	38	21	17	77.92	22.08
2011	1	12	34	4	5	91.07	8.93
2012	2	18	32	3	1	98.21	1.79
2013	1	10	37	3	5	91.7	8.93
2014	2	11	45	4	5	92.54	7.46
2015	1	7	48	16	7	91.14	8.86
2016	0	6	39	15	2	96.77	3.23
2017	1	7	46	10	2	96.97	3.03

Source: Eswatini Examination Council Statistics

Table 4.1 is an illustration of the Ka-Bhudla Primary school pass rate from 2010 to 2017. The pass rate is in respect to results obtained by learners in grade seven who are progressing to secondary school. The results are classified in such a way that the best performing learner obtains a *Merit*, which is a 75% pass mark up to 100%, and the lowest is a *Fail* with a mark below 44%. The overall pass rate of the school is depicted in the table *Pass%* where the lowest percentage recorded is 77.92% obtained in 2010 and the highest is 98.21% recorded in 2012.

The majority of the grade seven learners of 2012 passed and obtained higher percentage grades, compared to the pass percentage in 2010 when the school recorded a large number of failures – more than any other year. From 2011, the school has been performing well with an average pass rate of 94%. However, very few learners obtained a merit (76% - 100%) on their overall results, and most of the learners fall within the second class (56% - 65%) category. The statistics indicate that the school recorded a higher pass rate in the last two years 2016 (96.77%) and 2017 (96.97%) compared to the first two years of the FPE policy implementation of 2010 (77.92%) and 2011 (91.07%). The 2016 pass rate is relevant to the first FPE graduates.

Figure 4.2: Ka-Bhudla Primary school pass rates from 2010 to 2017



Source: Author's own interpretation

Summary of findings

Based on the above, to illustrate how the results of the first FPE graduates compare with previous years' results, it is found that: the first FPE graduates in 2016 and 2017 scored excellent grades compared with results from learners of previous years, in particular in 2010 and 2011 when the FPE policy started. During the following years as the policy was phased in, the grades became stable with no major variations in the pass rate.

In summary:

- the first FPE graduates' pass percentage of 2016 (96%) was much better than the results recorded when the FPE policy started in 2010 (77%);
- between 2011 and 2017, the average pass rate of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School has been 94%; and
- in all the years, only a few learners managed to obtain a merit pass above 75% in their studies.

A high pass percentage (96%) was obtained by the first FPE graduates' in 2016 despite the shortcomings and inadequacies experienced by the school and the teachers.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The data analysis and findings presented in this chapter relates to the replies from the principal and the eight teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School on their perceptions and experiences on the effects of the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini, specifically at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Furthermore, the pass rates of the first FPE graduates in 2016 and 2017 were analysed. The following chapter comprises conclusions and recommendations informed by the research analysis and findings.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 are revisited in this final chapter of the dissertation by way of formulating conclusions and recommendations per research objective. All the conclusions derive from the research analysis and findings articulated in chapter four. This chapter also concedes the recommendations of the study and so allowing suggestions for further research. Furthermore, these conclusions and recommendations will be summarised in a report and handed to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

The main purpose of this research was to obtain the primary teachers' point of view regarding the effects of the FPE policy on the quality of education in public schools in Eswatini with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. This overall purpose was achieved by accomplishing each of the sub-objectives listed in Chapter 1, section 1.3 (*Research purpose and objective*).

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the findings that are presented in the previous chapter. Conclusions are grouped per the research objectives.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To conduct a literature review to determine what constitutes education quality in public primary schools

A detailed literature review was conducted as presented in chapter 2. It was established that quality education provides the outcomes needed by the learners prosper in their communities, societies and the global village. It allows schools to align and integrate fully with their communities and access a range of services across sectors designed to support the educational development of their learners. Quality education is supported by three key pillars, namely (Slade, 2017):

- ensuring access to quality teachers;
- providing use of quality learning materials, study tools and professional development; and

- the establishment of safe and supportive quality learning environments.

The theoretical framework that underpins this study focused on the link between public administration and education. The theoretical framework of the study was set by the community of practice theory, the integrated systems theory, the change management theory and the stakeholder theory. These theories were briefly defined in Chapter 2, section 2.4 (*Theoretical foundation*).

The findings reflected that teachers are very clear on what constitute quality education and the measures that should be in place to ensure its existence. The significance of teachers' understanding of quality education is profound in that, it then becomes possible for the teachers to tell if the quality of education has been affected or not. The study revealed that quality education is not derived from a single aspect but from variety of interrelated processes. These involve the learning environment, teachers' availability and competencies, classroom environment and the availability of teaching aids. The conclusion confirms the assertions of Fouché (2017:2) as reviewed in chapter 2 section 2.2.1 (*Quality education in public primary schools*) on what constitutes quality education. The researcher noted the absence of any suggestion to online learning as a platform that could enhance efficient and convenient learning. The reason for this omission could be that, most of Eswatini public schools including the Ka-Bhudla Primary School are located in rural areas where the benefits of technology are not available due to lack of resources.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To determine the most appropriate research design and methodology to study the effects of the FPE policy on the quality of education in public schools in Eswatini

The research design and methodology of the study is outlined in chapter 3. The qualitative research method was chosen to extract the opinions of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School on the effects of the FPE policy on education quality of Eswatini public schools. A case study method was followed because the study required a close up and in-depth analysis of a given case in which data is collected, analysed and have the findings reported on. The case under study was the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The participants were the school principal and eight teachers of the

Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The sampled teachers were purposely chosen based on their experience on the learning process and outcomes prior to and after the introduction of the FPE policy at the school. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the participant to explain freely how they feel about the effects of the FPE policy on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

The preferred research design and methodology brought about trustworthy and valid research findings and recommendations about the effective implementation of the FPE policy.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To critically evaluate the changes in teaching and learning at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of the FPE policy

The introduction of the FPE policy was done prematurely and without proper consultation with all the stakeholders. The findings of this study anchored what Dlamini (2017:348) submitted that the country has adopted a noble policy without the required systems in place to successfully implement it. This assertion is evident from the manner in which the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School have expressed their dissatisfaction on the unmanageable workload they are facing following the implementation of the FPE policy. In addition, the school infrastructure was inadequate to accommodate the massive increase of learner enrolments. The teachers confirmed that the crowded classrooms led to a shift on the method of learning. The crowded classes do not afford an opportunity to attend to individual learner needs. Learners are tasked with more homework instead of classwork since there is limited time for in-class assessments and feedback.

5.2.4 Objective 4: To analyse the views of the teachers of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School regarding the effects of the FPE policy on the quality of education

Based in one of the remote rural areas of the country, the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers have been confronted with the realities of the scourge of poverty. As such the teachers understand that education is not affordable to the average Swazi child. This may then be attributed to the partial appreciation of the FPE policy for ensuring access to basic education irrespective of one's social standing. Partial in the sense that, though the teachers agree with the purpose of FPE and what the policy it seeks

to achieve, they are not oblivious to the fact that the policy has adversely affected the teaching and learning environment.

It is concluded that some of the teachers display animosity against the FPE policy. Among other reasons, the resentment was caused by the overcrowding of classrooms, shortage of resources and infrastructure, lowering of educational standards and more workload for teachers. Over and above that, teachers were incensed by not being consulted prior to the implementation of this policy.

The views of the teachers teaching at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School confirmed that there was a drastic increase in learner enrolments from 2010. The teachers also hinted that the school relies on the government support since the FPE policy was introduced in 2010. Delays in the disbursing of funds negatively affect the Ka-Bhudla Primary School as much needed learning aids cannot be acquired. Furthermore, the findings suggest that teaching seems to have been adversely affected following the implementation of the FPE policy. Not only are the teachers unable to assist learners individually and attending to their special needs, but the reliance on the government for funding further strains the teaching processes as funding is disbursed very late; resulting in a shortage of teaching aids for most part of the year. The unavailability of teaching aids has a negative effect on the quality of education at the school, as it is one of the important aspect which guarantees quality education.

It is also concluded that a decline in absenteeism was experienced and the learners became much more competitive and motivated to pass their grades. This might also be a reason for the increase in the pass rate from 2010.

5.2.5 Objective 5: To establish how to maintain education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School

It is concluded that acceptable quality education can be maintained by timeous hiring of more teachers. Teachers with the appropriate aptitude and skills to teach in the FPE environment must be recruited and developed. Teacher professional development is much needed. Training on ancillary skills to meet the needs of diverse students must be made available to the teachers. Regular reviews of the education curriculum are a necessary quality assurance measure to maintain quality education. Furthermore, infrastructure re-development is necessary to accommodate the high influx of learners.

5.2.6 Objective 6: To compare the first FPE graduates' average pass rate with previous years' results

The pass percentages of the first FPE graduates were examined to ascertain whether any remarkable changes exist in the pass percentage when compared with the results of previous years. The Government of Eswatini provides food to the learners in public schools, and the FPE policy allows children from poor living conditions to access educational resources at no personal expenses. The policy indirectly enabled the learners from poor families to grow and develop through the expansion of their own capabilities at school. The assumption of the researcher was confirmed that the progression of this group and the overall pass percentages would increase and reflect the social uplifting of the learners.

The first FPE graduates in 2016 and 2017 obtained an improved pass percentage of 96% and scored better results than the learners from previous years before implementation of the FPE policy in 2010 (77%).

The teachers carried the huge administrative workload and their increased duties with great success, since the implementation of the FPE policy. Fortunately, inadequate learning aids, a shortage of school furniture, the absence of infrastructure and a lack of teacher recruitment did not negatively affect the pass rate of the first FPE graduates.

5.2.7 Objective 7: To make conclusions and recommendations about the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini

Objective 7 is fully achieved in this final chapter of the dissertation that comprises the conclusions and recommendations.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose and objective of the study was to obtain the primary school teachers point of view regarding the effects of FPE policy on the quality of education in public schools of Eswatini, with specific reference to the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. The research managed to achieve this objective through highlighting the changes evidenced in the learning process as well analysing the results of graduates after the implementation of this policy. This was done by conducting a literature review which

successfully assisted in clearly indicating on what constitute quality education in Eswatini.

The study was able to utilise the most appropriate research design that was able to qualitatively understand the teacher's point of view regarding the effects of FPE policy on education quality. The study was also successful in critically analysing the views of the school principal and the teachers teaching at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Through the responses from the participants, the following recommendations could be made on how to restore quality education at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School within the FPE teaching and learning environment.

5.3.1 Maintaining quality education in public primary schools in Eswatini

The Government of Eswatini needs to make the funding of schools a priority. The government must invest in school infrastructure development by constructing more classrooms and making more furniture available to mitigate the surge in learner enrolments. This development will ensure that the acceptable teacher-learner ratio of 1:35 is realised to allow a smooth and efficient learning process.

In addition, any classroom-running and curriculum-building decisions must be put in the hands of the community.

5.3.2 Consulting relevant stakeholders in public education policy formulation

It is concluded from the literature review and the interview conducted with school principals and teachers were not consulted prior to the introduction of the FPE policy. The FPE policy has indeed be introduced in haste following a court judgement. However, this does not justify non-consultation of the main implementers of the policy. The Eswatini Government must ensure that all stakeholders are involved in education policy development, especially the teachers as one of the main implementers of education policy.

Teachers are often first to realise when certain practices, policies and procedures are no longer practicable. In addition, it is the view of the teachers that the school curriculum needs to be reviewed regularly.

5.3.3 Recruiting appropriately qualified and skilled teachers

The findings revealed an appreciation from the teachers on the attempt of the FPE policy to flatten the curve of inequality in public primary schools. The policy is credited for the decline in absenteeism and more motivated learners following the waiving of fees in all Eswatini public primary schools. However, the overcrowding in classrooms has posed new challenges for the school in dispensing quality education to the learners. Having effective teacher-learner engagement as one of the prerequisite for quality education as proclaimed by the teachers during the interviews, then it can be inferred that the FPE policy of Eswatini had a negative effect on the quality of education in public primary schools. The basis of this conclusion is premised on the responses from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School teachers who pointed to inadequate infrastructure and shortage of teachers to mitigate the surge of learners' enrolments at the school.

The problem of overcrowding in classrooms and the increased workload of the teachers will soon claim its toll. The picture painted from the responses of the teachers shows it is impossible to guarantee the social and personal development of individual learners in classes that had become too crowded to manage. Despite the improved pass percentages since the implementation of the FPE policy, the teachers carried a huge administrative burden. These challenges cannot be overlooked as it has the potential of demobilising quality education in the entire Eswatini. Therefore, the government needs to prioritise the hiring of teachers before the learning process becomes meaningless. The government needs to reverse the decision to freeze the appointment of new teachers. The recruitment of appropriately qualified and skilled teachers needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Teachers training and development is equally important. Government should ensure that all the teachers receive regular refresher trainings aligned to the diverse special needs of the learners.

5.3.4 Implementing internal control measures to maintain average pass rate

One of the considerations of this study was to ascertain whether the implementation of the FPE policy had any bearing of the overall school passing rate. This was done through comparing the first FPE graduates to previous years, and by noting any

changes on the school performance which may be attributed to the changes that followed the introduction of the FPE policy. The finding indicates that the Ka-Bhudla Primary School experienced the lowest pass of rate (77.92%) in the year 2010 when the FPE policy was introduced, as compared to the other preceding years of the rollout of this policy. The first graduate of FPE policy in 2016 performed much better with a 96.77% pass rate. This can be attributed to a number of factors. By 2016, the school would seemingly have been used to the challenges which accompanied the FPE policy thus reflecting a better pass rate. The overall results from the commencement of the FPE policy in 2011 up to 2017 does not reveal any major changes in the school pass rate. However, an observation was made that the results indicate less excelling learners in the school who manage to obtain an average of 66% pass grade or above. It is therefore safe to say that the study was not able to establish a negative impact of the FPE policy and to the overall pass rate of the school. This may be a result of numerous factors which may require further studies to be conducted.

Internal control measures to manage the rapid increase in the pass percentages could be considered by the school's government body.

5.4 AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

Further research on the empirical real-life experiences of the learners of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School is recommended to enhance the findings relating to the teacher's perceptions and experiences on the effects of the implementation of the FPE policy in Eswatini specifically at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School. Comparative studies on the effects of the FPE policy on education quality are also encouraged.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE APPROVAL

	
<p align="center">DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE</p>	
Date: 8 March 2019	<div><p>Ref #: PAM/2019/006 (Motsamai)</p><p>Name of applicant: Mr MW Motsamai</p><p>Student#: 50509101</p></div>
Dear Mr Motsamai	
<div><p>Decision: Ethics Clearance Approval 8 March 2019 to 7 March 2022</p></div>	
<p>Name: Mr MW Motsamai, student#: 50509101, email: motsamaiwandile@yahoo.com, tel: 012 319-7046</p> <p>[Supervisor: Dr C Alers, staff#: 90222237, email: alersc@unisa.ac.za, tel: 012 429-6286]</p>	
<p>Research project 'Teachers' perspectives on the effects of free primary education policy of Swaziland on education quality in public schools: Case of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School'</p> <p>Qualification: Master of Administration in Public Administration</p>	
<p>Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department: Public Administration and Management: Research Ethics Review Committee, for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 8 March 2019 to 7 March 2022. If necessary to complete the research, you may apply for an extension of the period. The decision will be tabled at the next College RERC meeting for notification/ratification.</p>	
<p>For full approval: The application was expedited and reviewed in compliance with the <i>Unisa Policy on Research Ethics</i> and the <i>Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment</i> by the RERC on 4 March 2019.</p>	
<p>The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.	
	<p align="right">University of South Africa Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150 www.unisa.ac.za</p>
<div><p>Open Rubric</p></div>	

- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to this Ethics Review Committee.
- 3) The researcher will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
- 4) Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
- 5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study, among others, the **Protection of Personal Information Act 4/2013; Children's Act 38/2005** and **National Health Act 61/2003**.
- 6) Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
- 7) Field work activities **may not** continue after the expiry date given. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Kind regards



Dr V Sambo

Acting Chairperson:
Research Ethics Review Committee
Office tel. : 012 429-4355;
Email : esambovt@unisa.ac.za



Prof MT Mogale

Executive Dean:
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Office tel. : 012 429-4805;
Email : mogalmt@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION LETTER

Ka-Bhudla Primary School

P.O.Box 12
Manzini

06 February 2019

To Whom it May Concern

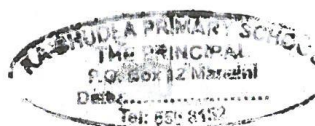
RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA AT KA-BHUDLA PRIMARY SCHOOL

This is to certify that Mr Mzwandile W.Motsamai, a student at the University of South Africa has been granted permission to collect data from Ka-Bhudla Primary School for the purpose to his research. The data to be collected is in respect of his study on the research topic of: *Teacher's perspective on the effect of Free Primary Education Policy of Eswatini on Education Quality in Public Schools 2010-2017*. Data collection will be through structured interviews on teachers as well as as information pertaining to the pass rate of the school before, during and after the implementation of Free Primary Education in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

Yours Sincerely



Nomfundo Simelane (head teacher)
Tel: +268 7604 6590



APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Mzwandile Wandile Motsamai and I am doing research with Dr C Alers a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Administration for my MA studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled:

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI ON EDUCATION QUALITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: 2010 – 2017

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to find out the views of public schools teachers on the effects of the free primary education policy on education quality implemented 8 years ago in Eswatini.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The study will be conducted with 8 teachers from the Ka-Bhudla Primary School who have taught at the school for at least the past five years. The sampled teachers had been identified based on their experience on the learning process and outcomes prior to the introduction of the FPE policy at the school. Contacts details of participants have been obtained through the office of the school principal who has granted permission for the collection of data at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves *semi-structured interviews* with only five questions to answer. Participants are required to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How long have you been a teacher at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
2. In your view what are the changes in the learning process following the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
3. What constitutes quality education in your view?
4. How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?
5. What is your view concerning the implementation of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?

The expected duration for interviews would be approximately 30 minutes per participant. However there is an estimate of 3 weeks needed to complete the whole set of interviews to be conducted for this study.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The participants will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise and the study will incur undue cost to the participants however, the study will enable participants to make a contribution to the battle of ideas on the effects of free primary education policy of Eswatini on the education quality in public schools.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There is no anticipation of risk but if any adverse events are experienced, the researcher will conduct a debriefing to put things right. However, the researcher will take precautionary steps to follow the prescribed standards of doing research such as one may not harm, coerce and falsify the information. All these and other principles will be adhered to.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research OR your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceeding.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. However your privacy will be protected in any publication of the information.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The survey data will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value (five years after completing the research project)

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

The participants will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise and the study will incur undue cost to the participants.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Economic and Management Sciences of Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr Mzwandile Wandile Motsamai on +26876270891/+27825243145 or email: motsamaiwandile@yahoo.com. The findings are accessible in 24 months after this interview.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact; 26876270891/+27825243145 or email: motsamaiwandile@yahoo.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Corlia Alers Tel: 012 429 6286 or email: alersc@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Mr Mzwandile Motsamai

APPENDIX D: TEMPLATE – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research title:

**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF FREE PRIMARY
EDUCATION POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI ON EDUCATION
QUALITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
2010 – 2017**

I, (participant name & surname), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

- I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a dissertation.
- I agree to be interviewed through an online platform.

**Participant's name and
surname**

Date

Signature

Mr MW Motsamai

**Researcher's name and
surname**

Date

Signature

(Mobile: 082 524 3145,
Email: motsamaiwandile@yahoo.com)

APPENDIX E: TEMPLATE – CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT WITH TRANSCRIBER

Student: _____

AND

Editor/Transcriber: _____

The research code of ethics mandates that confidentiality should be maintained throughout data collection, data analysis and reporting.

As an Editor/Transcriber I understand that I have access to confidential information. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of this responsibility and agree to the following:

- I understand that all information obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information, unless specifically authorised to do so.
- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.
- I agree to use the data solely for the purpose stipulated by the client.
- I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the data at all times and keep the data in secure, password protected location.
- I agree to shred all hard copies of data in my possession on completion of the project. All electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of my computer upon completion of this project.

Printed name

(Editor/Transcriber)

Mr Mzwandile
Wandile Motsamai

Researcher

Date

Date

Signature

Signature

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS AT THE KA-BHUDLA PRIMARY SCHOOL

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your extensive experience about the topic under study.
2. You are kindly requested to answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible.
3. The interview will last a maximum of 30-45 minutes.
4. Participation is anonymous: You are not requested to disclose your identity. Your privacy will be respected.
5. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give.
6. The information collected from you will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only.
7. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. Hence, your participation is regarded as voluntarily.
8. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and the study will not incur undue costs to you.
9. The data will be stored in a locked cupboard and the data stored in a computer will be protected by the use of a password. The data will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value (after five years).
10. A copy of the dissertation will be available in the library at the Muckleneuk Ridge Campus of the University of South Africa (Unisa), Pretoria.

The following questions will be posed to the teachers:

1. How long have you been a teacher at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
2. What constitutes quality education in your view?
3. In your view what are the changes in the learning process following the introduction of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
4. What is your view concerning the implementation of FPE at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
5. How has the increased enrolment of learners affected teaching and learning at the school?
6. How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPAL AND/OR DEPUTY PRINCIPAL OF THE KA-BHUDLA PRIMARY SCHOOL

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your extensive experience about the topic under study.
2. You are kindly requested to answer the questions as honestly and completely as possible.
3. The interview will last a maximum of 30-45 minutes.
4. Participation is anonymous: You are not requested to disclose your identity. Your privacy will be respected.
5. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give.
6. The information collected from you will be treated with strict confidentiality and used for research purposes only.
7. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. Hence, your participation is regarded as voluntarily.
8. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and the study will not incur undue costs to you.
9. The data will be stored in a locked cupboard and the data stored in a computer will be protected by the use of a password. The data will be destroyed when it is no longer of functional value (after five years).
10. A copy of the dissertation will be available in the library at the Muckleneuk Ridge Campus of the University of South Africa (Unisa), Pretoria.

The questions for the school principal and/or the deputy principal of the Ka-Bhudla Primary School, include:

1. How long have you been a principal or deputy principal at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School?
2. Are there any changes on the overall performance of the school following the introduction of FPE?
3. What is your view on the implementation of the FPE education at the school?
4. Are there any effects on education quality at the Ka-Bhudla Primary School following the implementation of FPE?
5. How would you explain the rate of turn over for teachers following the implementation of FPE?
6. How can acceptable education quality be maintained in view of the high enrolment in schools caused by the FPE policy?